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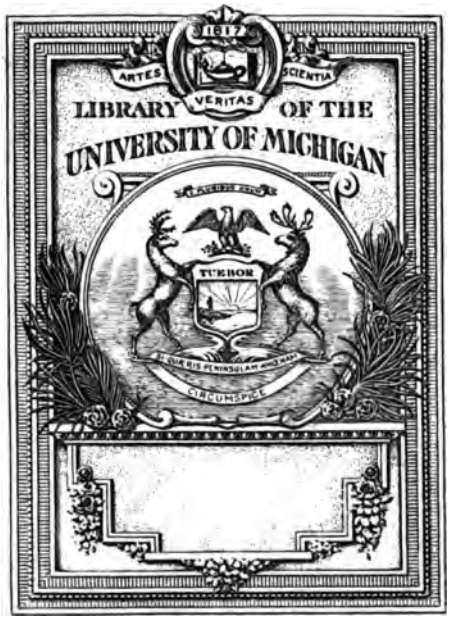
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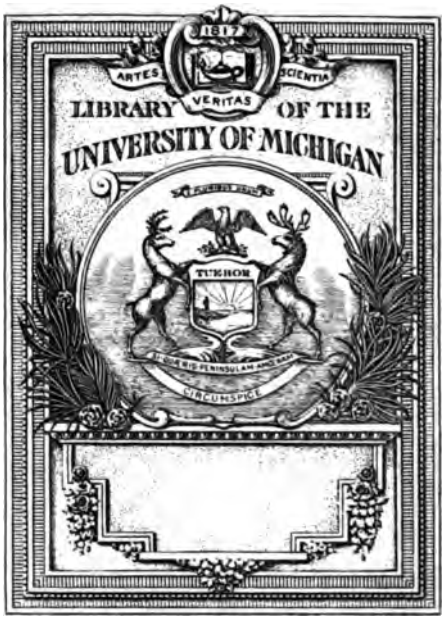
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SERMONS

ON

EDUCATION, ON REFLECTION,

ON THE

GREATNESS OF GOD IN THE WORKS OF NATURE

AND IN

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD,

ON

CHARITY,

AND ON

VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS;

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE

REV. GEORGE JOACHIM ZOLLIKOFER,

MINISTER OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION AT LEIPSICK.

By the Rev. William Tooke, F. R. S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ERRATA.

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Page 53. line 10 from the bottom, for *thinks*, read *think*.
— 65. — 8 from the bottom, for *are obliged*, read *are* they *obliged*.
— 72. — 8 for *to* parents, read *on* parents.
— 102. — 16 for prudent *a* demeanour, read prudent demeanour.
— 105. — 4 for *earth*, read *ground*.
— 161. — 13 after *thoſe*, inſert *matters*.

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Page 481. line 4 from the bottom, for inſtituted, read didſt inſtitute.

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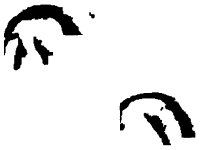

SERMON I.

On the Formation of the Minds of Children.

GOD, thou haſt endowed us with underſtanding and reaſon, and thereby granted us great prerogatives over the other inhabitants of the earth. Yes, thou haſt thus made us capable of elevating our minds to the knowledge of thee, and of being hereafter admitted to the ſociety of ſuperior ſpirits. Thou wilt that we ſhould here cultivate our underſtanding and our reaſon, as far as the imperfections and infirmities of our preſent condition allow, and learn to employ them in ſuch manner as to become wiſe and happy. Oh preſerve us from degrading our ſouls, from diſregarding our prerogatives and leaving our faculties unemployed; from debaſing ourſelves, by an entirely ſenſual and carnal life, to a level with the brute creation, and thereby rendering ourſelves unqualified for being and becoming what, according to the deſigns of thy wiſdom and benignity, we ought to be and to become. Teach

us rather to recogniſe the dignity of our nature, and to act conſiſtently with it. Grant that we may faithfully uſe all the means and opportunities for becoming more intelligent and wiſe, and for making farther progreſs in the knowledge of truth. But grant us alſo the grace to be as uſeful to our brethren, in this reſpect, as we at all times can be, every one according to his ſtation and calling. Vouchſafe eſpecially to thoſe among us, to whom thou haſt committed the culture of the minds and the hearts of children, ſuch a portion of light, of zeal and fidelity, as is neceſſary to the diſcharge of the duties incumbent upon them. Give them a clear perception of the importance of their office, that they may contend with the utmoſt prudence and reſolution againſt the difficulties attendant on it. Bleſs, to this end, the inſtruction we are now about to receive on this head, and hearken to our prayer, for the ſake of thy ſon, our ſaviour, in whoſe name we farther addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

PARENTAL affection being ſo natural and ſo powerful an inſtinct; parents ſo readily conſenting to ſacrifice their own happineſs to that of their

their children, and in ſome meaſure to live rather for them than for themſelves: it is really ſurpriſing, that they are not more concerned about their education, or that they fall into ſo many and ſuch grand miſtakes in reſpect to it. Doubtleſs the reaſon of this lies not ſo much in the want of tenderneſs and affection, as in the wrong and incompetent notions generally entertained of education. That is, this duty is but too often confined to the care of providing for the life and the health of the children; of teaching them ſome mechanical works and arts; loading their memory with a multitude of words which they do not underſtand; inſtructing them in the rules of external propriety of behaviour and politeneſs; warning them of the groſſer enormities which are followed by puniſhment and diſgrace; diveſting them of their natural ſimplicity and openneſs of heart, and inſtilling into them the arts of reſerve, diſſimulation and flattery; communicating to them a few notions, for the moſt part falſe, of the occupations, the pleaſures and advantages of ſocial life; and rendering them dexterous in ſome method of gaining a livelihood, or managing their hereditary eſtates and maintaining their rank. In theſe reſpects the generality of parents are not wanting either in pains or expence for promoting what they term the benefit of their children, and in fact they thus do contribute much to their welfare. May we not therefore have reaſon to hope that even this might be done in a ſtill more profitable manner, if men had

juſter conceptions of what belongs to education? It is this that has moved me to ſhew you, in ſeveral diſcourſes, what is peculiarly requiſite in the education of children, and how we are to ſet about it. It principally conſiſts in the forming of their minds and their hearts, and in the beſt method of leading them to religion and to chriſtianity. To-day I ſhall confine myſelf to the firſt head, and diſcourſe of the forming of the minds of children in general, and without regard to religion and chriſtianity.

Probably the obſervations I intend to make on this ſubject, may appear too dry and unentertaining to many. Probably others will deem them fitter for the lecture of a philoſophical than that of a chriſtian teacher. The attentive hearer, with whom uſeful inſtruction is of more account than fleeting amuſement, will eaſily obviate the former of theſe objections; and the latter is founded altogether on a prejudice, to which we ſhall pay no regard if we are rationally devoted to religion and virtue. Chriſtian faith and chriſtian virtue preſuppoſe the proper, the beſt uſe of our natural capacities and endowments. All that promotes and facilitates the latter, promotes and facilitates the former likewiſe; and certainly neither infidelity nor vice would commit ſuch ravages among mankind, if more pains had been beſtowed in their infancy and childhood on the due forming of their mind and heart. We will therefore paſs on to the ſubject itſelf without farther heſitation.

To

To form the underſtanding or the mind of children, implies, to give them right notions of things, and to habituate them to ſuch a way of thinking and judging, as is conſonant to truth, and by which they may become wiſe. Man by means of his intellect can repreſent to himſelf as well what paſſes within him, as what is and happens without him; he can judge of the nature of theſe things, aſſociate them, ſeparate them, and by comparing and contraſting them together, can collect new images which may be augmented without end. But he is not ſo conſtituted by nature that he muſt neceſſarily figure to himſelf the objects he may know as they actually are, or ſo as that he cannot err in the judgment he paſſes on them, in the compariſon he makes between them, in the agreement or incongruity he perceives among them. He may repreſent to himſelf all the things that ſurround him on ſeveral ſides, or only on one; as greater or leſs, better or worſe, more profitable or more detrimental than in reality they are. He may connect things together which do not belong to one another, and arbitrarily divide aſunder what were connected by an indiſſoluble tie; he may take one fact for the effect or for the cauſe of another, which has nothing at all in common with it; and the leſs he has employed the faculties of his mind, the more negligently and careleſsly he has uſed them, the oftener muſt he fall into ſuch errors in thinking, in judging and in determining. Of how great conſequence then muſt it be for him, at the

time when he is beginning to exert and to employ theſe faculties, to be guided in the right application of them, to learn how moſt juſtly and properly to uſe them! And in this it is that the forming of the minds of children conſiſts. They ſtand in need of a prudent and experienced guide on the way by which we attain to the knowledge of truth, who ſhall not only warn them of all the turnings and by-paths on it, and, as often as they inadvertently ſtrike into them, bring them back, but teach them alſo how to avoid all circuitous paths and mazes and to purſue their object without deviation. Their underſtanding muſt not only be exerciſed in general, and ſtored with various kinds of knowledge; but it muſt likewiſe be ſo exerciſed as by degrees to acquire the habit of examining and judging of themſelves what they are deſirous of knowing, of readily diſtinguiſhing the true from the falſe, and in theſe inveſtigations and judgments of conſtantly following the ſafeſt rules, and taking the ſhorteſt way. This, however, is not ſo well effected by inſtructing them in theſe rules of thinking, or by imprinting them on their memory, as by teaching them to obſerve on all occaſions whether and wherefore they have juſtly or unjuſtly reflected and determined; and by thinking, conſidering, inveſtigating, and remaining doubtful or decided, with them, in a ſociable and familiar manner proportionate to their age. By this means we make them gradually attentive to the operations of their own mind, and acquainted with the principles

ciples and rules upon which it proceeds, and teach them by their own experience to mark the obſtructions which impede it in its operations, and the advantages which aſſiſt it in its proceſs.

But I perceive my diſcourſe, by thus inſiſting on generals, to be growing abſtruſe. I will endeavour to render it more eaſy of comprehenſion, by calling your attention ſucceſſively to the different parts of the ſubject. The buſineſs of which I am ſpeaking is likewiſe extremely arduous, my friends; the beſt precepts are not ſufficient for meeting all the difficulties that occur in it; and practice in this reſpect likewiſe is undoubtedly the ableſt inſtructreſs. At the ſame time, I think you may greatly alleviate your taſk, and labour ſucceſsfully in forming the minds of your children and pupils, by taking into conſideration the following rules.

The firſt is this: Repreſs not their curioſity or their inquiſitiveneſs. It is in itſelf no fault. It is rather a ſtrong impulſe and an excellent means to become intelligent and wiſe. And it generally proceeds from ignorance, or pride, or indolence, or petulance when we authoritatively impoſe ſilence on children that aſk queſtions, and chide them for impertinence and idle curioſity, if they are not ſatisfied with the firſt anſwer we give them. Indeed children ſhould learn to behave with modeſty, and particularly when in the company of ſtrangers, who are not preſent on their account, but on that of their parents. But their parents, their guardians and

tutors, will loſe the beſt opportunities for inſtructing them, if they conſtantly require them to be dumb in their preſence, and only to remain ſilent hearers. No, it is their duty, and if they love their children or their pupils, it will be their pleaſure, not to anſwer their queſtions with a teſty Yes or No, but to anſwer them in ſuch a manner as ſhall amply inſtruct them in what they wanted to know, and at the ſame time be entertaining to them. Nay they will eagerly ſeize on theſe opportunities for exerciſing the reflection of the child or the youth, and by continued queſtions to make them the diſcoverers of what they did not know before. And even ſhould their queſtions be of ſuch a nature that their parents or their preceptors cannot anſwer them, inſtead of being angry at it, they will confeſs their own ignorance, or excuſe themſelves on the imperfection of human knowledge in general, or endeavour to make the inquirer underſtand, that the anſwering of his queſtion preſuppoſes knowledge which he has not and cannot have yet, but which hereafter will amply requite his induſtry if he do but perſiſt in acquiring it.

A ſecond rule for forming the mind is this: Accuſtom your children or your pupils to the uſe of their ſenſes; teach them to apprehend juſtly. The impreſſion which outward objects make upon us by means of the ſenſes, and the ideas that thence ariſe in our mind, are the materials as it were which our mind works up, and on which at length is founded

all

all the knowledge and ſcience of mankind. The more various, the more juſt, the more complete theſe ideas are, ſo much the more able is the mind to exerciſe itſelf in thought, and the more eaſily and ſurely can it aſcend to ſublimer and more univerſal knowledge. But, ſince we acquire a knowledge of ſenſible things far better from the impreſſions their preſence makes upon us, than from any deſcriptions of them that can be given us in words; let your children learn what they may ſee, hear and apprehend themſelves, not barely from books or oral inſtruction, but ſhew it them actually, whenever you have an opportunity for it. In this manner let them ſee and obſerve the beauties of nature, the wonders of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, the various phænomena of the atmoſphere, the magnificence of the ſtarry heavens; and help them by degrees to diſtinguiſh and arrange the multiplicity of obſcure ideas which from all ſides preſs upon their minds. But let them ſee all theſe things with their own eyes, and apprehend them in their own way; and weaken not the impreſſion they hence receive by untimely and far-fetched explanations. Lead them into the habitation and the barns of the countryman, into the work-ſhops of the artiſt and the mechanic; point out to them there, how the various productions of the earth are wrought up, how they are prepared for the uſe, the accommodation and pleaſure of mankind; teach them to know the principal implements and tools employed in theſe occupations, and to have

have a proper eſteem for the perſons that follow them. This will furniſh their underſtanding and their reaſon, as well as their imagination and genius, with abundant ſources of uſeful and agreeable meditation.

Conſtantly enure them to attention. Attention is the parent of all ſolid information. Habituate them not to paſs too quickly from one object to another, to conſider every matter on ſeveral ſides, and as far as poſſible on all; to view it not only in the whole, but in its ſeveral parts. It is not my meaning however that you ſhould weary their attention in the firſt years of their education, by forcing them to tarry too long at one and the ſame object; but I wiſh you gradually to convince them in a ſenſible manner of the great utility of a more continued attention. This may be done occaſionally even in the moſt trifling matters. They admire, for inſtance, and are gratified with the beautiful colours or the delightful odour of a flower. Hence you may take occaſion to inform them how many other beauties, how many marks of wiſdom and ſkill, the practiſed eye of the connoiſſeur would find in the ſtructure of this flower, in the formation of its leaves, in the conſtruction of its pod, ſeeds and the like. Tell them therefore, how much they might have obſerved in this or the other object, if they had conſidered it a little leſs curſorily, if they had dwelt ſomewhat longer upon it. This method of exerciſing and ſtrengthening their attention, will certainly

certainly effect more than the moſt earneſt exhortations to duty, and the ſevereſt puniſhment on the neglect of it.

A third rule to be obſerved in forming the minds of children is this: Beware of giving them falſe or not ſufficiently preciſe ideas of any matter, though of never ſo trifling import. It is far better that they ſhould be utterly ignorant of a hundred things, than have wrong notions of one; far better that you abſolutely refuſe to anſwer certain queſtions at all, than anſwer them in an ambiguous and inadequate manner. In the former caſe, they ſtill know that they are ignorant on this point, and may ſupply the defect of their knowledge in time: whereas in the latter they think themſelves ſufficiently informed on the ſubject, and ever remain ignorant on that very account. Beſides, the firſt ideas we receive of natural or moral objects are as it were the ground plot of all we afterwards acquire. Are they indeterminate and falſe, then will their baneful influence extend itſelf to all the reſt. Yet how common it is to err in this reſpect! It is thought that any anſwer is good enough to the queſtion of a child or a youth. The impoſing a palpable falſehood on them is a matter of no conſideration, provided they are reduced to ſilence by it. We conſole ourſelves with thinking that in time they will learn to underſtand the matter more truly of themſelves. But this expectation is extremely fallacious. Firſt impreſſions always laſt the longeſt, whether they be in conformity

formity with truth, or miſlead us into error. And even if a man in riper years find out his miſtake, yet muſt he be ever on his guard leſt it ſlip into his ideas and apprehenſions, and deceive him again. Give a child, for example, the falſe idea, that thunder and lightning are the effects and tokens of divine diſpleaſure, and that they are ſent to terrify and to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth. How deep will this opinion ſettle itſelf in his mind! How difficult will it be for him even in a maturer period of life, to take what he has ſo long conſidered as an evident proof of divine indignation, for the effect of ſupreme wiſdom and benignity! And even if the youth or the man diſmiſs that error and adopt this truth, yet how often will the impreſſion which ſtill remains, from the firſt mode of repreſentation, unconſciouſly lead him to falſe concluſions, or overwhelm him with conſternation and terror! Is not this fault in education that I am ſpeaking of, the reaſon why certain kinds of ſuperſtition are ſo hard to be rooted out, that they purſue and perſecute even perſons who actually perceive the folly of them, during their whole lives?

Another uſeful precept in forming the minds of children, which is cloſely connected with the foregoing, is this: Set them to learn nothing which either on account of their tender age, or from the want of other kinds of knowledge neceſſary to that purpoſe, they cannot comprehend. Meaſure not their capacities by yours. Attempt not to inſtruct them

them in matters which you yourſelf can ſcarcely comprehend, or of which you only in later years have been able to acquire any tolerable notions, after particular exertions of your mental powers. In vain, for example, would you labour, by philoſophical argumentation, to certify them of the commencement of the world, of the neceſſity of a firſt and eternal cauſe of it, of the ſpiritual nature of our ſoul, &c. By ſuch endeavours you would only make them diſguſted with your inſtruction, and they would waſte their time and apply their faculties for nothing. Even their memory would not long retain the feeble impreſſion it received from ſuch matters as they could not comprehend. Only that which we learn from conſideration, and wherein our mind or our heart is thoroughly intereſted, can make an impreſſion on us that is not to be effaced by time. Encumber not their memory then with ſigns or words, without at the ſame time augmenting their knowledge with the real information they are intended to convey. On the contrary, allow them in the uſe of no words to which they annex no ſignification, or one that is quite different from what ſhould be communicated by them. When you hear them make uſe of ſuch words and phraſes the meaning whereof is probably as yet unknown to them, always aſk them, what they underſtand by ſuch expreſſions; let them ſignify to you what it is they want to indicate by them; or, if this does not ſuit, inquire after the properties and effects of it; help them in tracing

them out, make as much as poſſible theſe properties, theſe effects, ſenſible to them; or, if the matter be of ſuch a nature that you can neither ſhew it to them nor by any other means adapt it to their comprehenſion, then caution them at leaſt againſt the miſapplication of ſuch words, and teach them to reckon it a mere ſound, the meaning of which they muſt take time to learn. Would the gift of ſpeech be ſo much miſuſed by the generality of mankind; ſhould we ſo frequently hear them talk, in ſo confident a tone, and with ſo voluble a tongue, of things which they either do not underſtand at all, or of which they have very confuſed ideas, if they had been accuſtomed in their childhood and youth to think ſomewhat diſtinctly at every word, and not barely to attend to the ſigns, but more to the things ſignified by them? But how ſeldom is this rule obſerved! What is more common than to hear children, ſtill in their liſping ſtate, making uſe of words it is impoſſible they ſhould underſtand; to hear them talking, for inſtance, of the atmoſphere, of the ſoul, of exiſtence, of ſpirits, of God, of virtue, without being reminded by any one of their ignorance, or any pains being taken to remove it? And what is the conſequence of this? They continue to uſe theſe words, ſometimes in a proper, and ſometimes in an improper manner, as chance or luck directs, imagine they underſtand them, and yet even in advanced age have either annexed no meaning at all to them, or one very different from the

the true. Words are ſigns of the riches of our mind; but theſe riches are imaginary, and thoſe ſigns are like counterfeit coin, when we are not acquainted with their meaning.

To theſe precepts, the obſervance of which will be of great utility in forming the minds of children, another muſt be added, by no means of leſs importance. It is this: Endeavour not only to increaſe and extend their knowledge, but likewiſe to render it ſolid and ſure. It is far better for them to know a few things thoroughly, than to have only a ſuperficial acquaintance with many. Beware of the ordinary weakneſs of parents and tutors on this head. They often conſult rather the gratification of their own vanity, than the real advantage of their children and pupils. If they can talk on many and various ſubjects with a certain flippancy and confidence, it fills the ignorant hearer with aſtoniſhment; if they are employed in the ſtudy of ſeveral arts and ſciences at once; if they already, in their childhood or youth, can anſwer queſtions which men both in underſtanding and years will not venture to decide: their maſters are delighted at the great ſucceſs of their endeavours. And yet it is impoſſible that the underſtanding which takes in ſo much at once, and muſt direct its attention to ſuch a diverſity of matters, ſhould make proper diſtinctions among them, and acquire a ſolid knowledge of all. It will rather get the habit of conſidering every thing with a tranſient regard, and of inveſtigating nothing.

Avoid

Avoid this miſtake, you who have the care of forming and inſtructing others. Teach them to think profoundly. Teach them, not only that a ſubject is, and that it has theſe or the other properties and effects; but teach them likewiſe, as far as their capacity will allow them to apprehend, why the ſubject is ſo and no otherwiſe, and why it has theſe properties and effects. Never require them, either from indolence or ſelf-love, to believe every thing you ſay on your bare word, or to hold your aſſertions for infallible oracles. Accuſtom them much rather to aſk you the reaſon of what you ſay, and to receive your inſtruction as truth, not ſo much out of reſpect for you, as on account of your arguments. Unleſs you do this, they will become in time either ſceptics or ſervile followers of other men's opinions. They will, properly ſpeaking, know nothing; but will only be able to repeat what others have thought and ſaid before them.

The greateſt pains however you can take, to form the mind of your child or your ſcholar, will be of little real ſervice to him, if you barely conduct him to knowledge, and not at the ſame time to wiſdom, which conſiſts in the right application of it. This gives you occaſion for other rules of proceeding, which are theſe: Shew them, in whatever they learn, the uſe they may and ſhould make of it to themſelves and others. Teach them to conſider every thing on its practical ſide, and actually to bring it into uſe on all proper occaſions. Make it your

your principal and conſtant aim to teach them to judge rightly of the value of things. This is true wiſdom, which is of far greater value than all the other ſciences together, and which can never be obtained too ſoon, as it is eſſential to the proper conduct of life. Teach therefore your children to obſerve the great difference that ſubſiſts between outward, tranſient, periſhable goods and advantages, and ſuch as are properly our own, and which we continually retain. Teach them to prize health and ſtrength of body more than riches or a beautiful figure; the approbation of conſcience more than the eſteem and the applauſe of men; and virtue and integrity beyond wealth, honour, health and life. Theſe are doctrines, which are ſo incontrovertible, and which may be rendered ſo comprehenſible even to children, that it is almoſt always the fault of their parents or their tutors, when they learn to think otherwiſe. Does your child, for example, admire the ſplendor, the richneſs, the coſtlineſs of ſome perſon's dreſs; aſk him on the firſt proper occaſion afterwards, whether a bad man who ſhould wear ſuch cloaths would be the better for them; whether they could give a ſick man health, an infirm perſon ſtrength, or communicate to an ignorant man underſtanding and diſcretion; whether it would not be much nobler to relieve a number of poor, and to go leſs ſplendidly cloathed, than to be unmerciful, to leave a brother to languiſh in miſery, and to be ſwoln with pride under borrowed plumage. Does

he make too great account of a fine figure; then ſhew him other children or grown perſons, who, with a much leſs handſome form, are more reſpected and beloved, as they are more humble, more gentle, more beneficent, and better than they; or tell him of certain perſons who by various accidents have loſt the elegance of their form, or who, with all their beauty, have been hated and deſpiſed, as not having a beautiful ſoul, as having no real merit. Is he too much captivated with the praiſes that are beſtowed upon him; take the firſt occaſion to ſhew him, how prodigal and inconſiderate moſt men are in the diſtribution of their praiſes; how often they praiſe a thing which they do not underſtand, do not eſteem, do not love; how ſelfiſh and fickle they are in their judgments, &c. But would you have your children or your pupils learn to judge rightly of theſe and ſimilar things, o you whom God has appointed to be parents and tutors; then muſt they never hear any other than right judgments paſſed upon them by you. If you allow yourſelves to be captivated by the luſtre of rich apparel, a beautiful figure, and other ſuch outward diſtinctions, if you yourſelves ſet great ſtore by theſe objects, and attribute to them a vaſt importance by the warmth and gravity with which you treat them, if you yourſelves ſhew to perſons decorated by ſuch diſtinctions a particular deference on their account; the very beſt leſſons you can give your children on this article in the hours of inſtruction, will be of no effect.

effect. But treat theſe things yourſelf with a certain generous indifference; eſteem and honour true merit alone, under whatever form, in whatever dreſs and ſtation it appears, and your doctrine, ſupported on your example, will infallibly produce the faireſt fruits.

Another rule, ariſing from the foregoing, is: Guard them from being haſty in forming concluſions, and avail yourſelf of all opportunities for leading them, by obſervations, to circumſpection and preciſion in their inferences and judgments. How many miſtakes, for example, may a man commit, who precipitately takes two objects, that immediately follow or accompany each other, for effect and cauſe! How many kinds of ſuperſtition, how many errors in natural philoſophy as well as in morality, owe their origin and their ſubſiſtence merely to this precipitancy! For example, would the good man, who meets with ſevere misfortunes and afflictions, be ſo frequently declared a hypocrite, and the ſinner, who ſucceeds in his undertakings, be pronounced the favourite of heaven, were we not ſo prone to take natural events for neceſſary conſequences of their good or bad conduct, for infallible evidences of divine complacency or diſpleaſure? Should we place the loſſes, the troubles, the calamities, which the virtuous eventually undergo, and which they muſt endure, to the account of virtue herſelf, and repreſent her under the moſt diſagreeable images, if we were not accuſtomed to

conſider all things that happen together or in regular ſucceſſion, as neceſſarily belonging to one another? This however is often derived from early education. At leaſt it may be very much prevented by it.

But the time will not allow me to purſue theſe obſervations farther. By way of concluſion we will briefly draw a few reſults from the foregoing precepts, which may induce us to put them in practice.

What a difficult taſk is this of forming the minds of children! A reſult which doubtleſs every attentive hearer of my preſent diſcourſe has already drawn for himſelf. And in fact, what attention, what application, what unwearied patience, what condeſcenſion, is neceſſary for teaching a child or a youth to apprehend juſtly, to think juſtly, to judge juſtly! What diverſity in the manner of applying theſe endeavours is requiſite to the diverſity of human capacities and diſpoſitions! How often does a man find himſelf obliged to labour an unfruitful ſoil; and how eaſily may tares and weeds get the aſcendancy even in a good one!

But the more difficult the taſk, the more is he bound to exert his faculties to the utmoſt, who has it to perform, that he may accompliſh it with ſucceſs. This is another reſult from what has been ſaid, which probably ſome from indolence may have neglected to draw. The greateſt difficulties will be at length overcome, if we contend with them as often

often as they appear, and neglect no advantage that may facilitate the conqueſt. This is the caſe with education in general, and with the forming of the minds of children in particular. If you confine this buſineſs to certain hours or ſeaſons, and then loſe ſight of it entirely; if you do not entirely fail in your deſign, you will certainly accompliſh it but very defectively. The mind of the child or the youth, is conſtantly at work; it is conſtantly therefore in need of an inſpector or guide. If you continually accompany him, as much as poſſible; if you regard and employ, not only the hours devoted properly to ſtudy, but alſo his pleaſures and ſports, as means and opportunities for labouring at the formation of his mind; if you turn every accidental circumſtance to account for effectuating this deſign, certainly your endeavours will not be in vain; the fruit of them will frequently ſurpaſs your expectations.

Difficult however as this buſineſs is, and much diligence as it demands, it is no leſs noble and delightful. This is a third reſult we may derive from our foregoing conſiderations. What can be more becoming a reaſonable being, and what ſhould be more pleaſant to him, than to facilitate to another being of his own ſpecies, with whom he ſtands in the cloſeſt connection, the attainment to that perfection whereof he is capable, to obſerve the firſt rays of his dawning intellect, and the various effects of the ſtronger or weaker effulgence

of it, to aſſiſt the feeble efforts of his ſtill tottering reaſon, to communicate or remove whatever may promote or retard its progreſs, to lend our own experience to one ſtill unexperienced, and our force to one yet impotent, to put aſide the impediments he meets with in his way, to warn him of the miſtakes we ourſelves have committed, and to render him an intelligent votary of truth, a ſagacious and judicious, a truly wiſe man? How much muſt ſuch an one acquire himſelf, who does this with earneſtneſs and application; and how much may he thereby contribute, not only to the benefit of the individual, but frequently to that of the whole community!

Laſtly, I would recommend you to judge from the whole, my friends, whether it be an indifferent matter, whether it be not rather extremely dangerous to leave children long and frequently to the care and in the company of perſons totally uncultivated, and with minds full of prejudices and errors! What will, indeed what can ſuch perſons contribute to the forming of their minds? Are they in a condition, even with the beſt intentions, to obſerve the rules of circumſpection we have delivered above? Can one blind perſon ſafely lead another? Will not your children, by frequenting them, get the habit of uſing words which they do not underſtand, of forming opinions on matters they are unacquainted with, of connecting truth with falſehood, of preferring the marvellous to the natural, the myſterious to the intelligible, of determining from ſelfiſhneſs and

without

without reaſon, of maintaining their opinion with obſtinacy, and of allowing themſelves to be dazzled by every outſide ſhew? And, on the other ſide, how many opportunities do you not thus loſe of inſtructing them, of admoniſhing them, of correcting them, of encouraging or reſtraining them, and of turning to advantage the happy moments wherein you may advance them ſeveral ſteps, when you may free them from ſome error, or lead them to the knowledge of truth? Oh be jealous of this happineſs; and be perſuaded, that parents and tutors are never more great and reſpectable, than when ſtanding beſide their children or their pupils, and teaching them wiſdom by their leſſons and their conduct. This is proper to your vocation; this is well-pleaſing to the God of order, who has placed you in this ſtation; and by ſuch behaviour alone may you promiſe yourſelves his bleſſing in this, and his reward in the future world.

SERMON II.

On the Formation of the Hearts of Children.

GOD, creator and father of mankind, thou haſt not only endowed us with underſtanding and reaſon, and thus put us in a condition to diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood, good from bad, but thou haſt alſo given us a heart that can feel the true, the beautiful, the good, which is inceſſantly in purſuit of them, and taſtes the pureſt pleaſure in their enjoyment. At the ſame time, by the œconomy which thou haſt eſtabliſhed in nature, thou haſt adorned virtue with various and powerful attractions, and given vice a deſpicable and hideous aſpect. Thou haſt accurately adapted thy commands to our wants and circumſtances, and ſo connected all things together, that the obſervance of thy commands is attended with peace, content and happineſs, and the tranſgreſſion of them with diſquietude, miſery and ſorrow. We thank thee for this unſpeakable act of bounty, compaſſionate Father. We rejoice in theſe wiſe and benign inſtitutions of thy condeſcending love.

love. Grant that we may always ſo uſe both the one and the other, as is conformable with thy deſign and our real benefit. Let us never ſeparate knowledge and virtue, and labour as diligently at the improvement of our hearts and lives, as in the cultivation of our underſtandings. Teach us to know ourſelves, to keep a guard upon our appetites and affections, to turn them to the beſt and worthieſt objects, and to ſuppreſs every inordinate motion as it ariſes within, that it may not gather ſtrength and become a paſſion. Vouchſafe us the grace to think and act always as rational and moral creatures, and to ſeek our happineſs on the path of duty and virtue. Beſtow theſe thy bleſſings particularly on ſuch of us as are employed in the formation of juvenile hearts, and furniſh them with all the neceſſary talents and endowments for this arduous and important taſk. Bleſs to the furtherance of theſe aims the conſiderations in which we are now about to engage, and hear our prayer for the ſake of Chriſt, in whoſe name we farther call upon thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

EVERY ſuperior attainment of mind to which a man can arrive by reflection and practice, all the ſagacity and knowledge he may acquire by its means,

means, are only ſo far eſtimable as he is enabled thereby to promote his own real happineſs and that of other men. This however he can no otherwiſe do than by willingly and faithfully following the light of his underſtanding; by not only thinking and judging agreeably to truth, but likewiſe by acting in conformity with it; by not only nicely diſtinguiſhing between good and ill, but likewiſe by loving and ſeeking the good alone, and by deteſting and avoiding the ill. His underſtanding and his will, his ſentiments and his behaviour, ſhould therefore be in perfect uniſon. The knowledge of truth ſhould lead him to the love and the practice of virtue. And this, my friends, ſhould alſo be the aim of a rational and chriſtian education; which conſiſts, as I lately had occaſion to mention, not barely in forming the minds, but likewiſe in forming the hearts of children, and in training them to religion and to chriſtianity. Of the former, the formation of their minds, we have already diſcourſed. The ſecond, or the formation of their hearts, ſhall employ us to-day, and, if it be the will of God, on Sunday next; and the third, namely, their introduction to religion and to chriſtianity, we purpoſe to take in hand on the firſt convenient opportunity.

To form the hearts of children, means to direct their appetites and affections to the worthieſt objects, to inſpire them with a predominant love for all that is true and right and proper, and thereby to render the performance of their duty eaſy and pleaſant

pleaſant to them. The formation of the heart preſuppoſes, as every one readily perceives, the formation of the mind; and though the latter be in ſome meaſure diſtinct from the former, and may ſubſiſt alone, yet the former can by no means ſubſiſt independently on the latter. It is inherent in our nature, that our will, on moſt occaſions, ſhould follow the perceptions and dictates of our underſtanding. We will only that which we conceive to be good; and we abhor only that which we hold to be bad; and if at times we are indifferent or averſe towards the good, and covet and ſeek the bad, it is that we then conſider the good as bad, and the bad as good. The more juſtly therefore we think and judge, and the more eaſy and natural this way of thinking and judging is become, ſo much the juſter likewiſe will be the determinations of our will and the affections and averſions ariſing from them. Of courſe then, the more carefully the underſtanding of a child or a youth is cultivated and formed, the greater ſucceſs may we promiſe ourſelves in regard to the formation of his heart; which, in fact, for the moſt part conſiſts only in teaching him to apply the juſt ideas and judgments that have been communicated to him, or that we have helped him to acquire, to whatever has any reference to his moral conduct and the happineſs of himſelf and others; in endeavouring to facilitate to him this application by a wiſe uſe of every favourable circumſtance, and by removing or diminiſhing the inward or outward impediments which

which ſtand in his way, or which may make it very difficult for him to follow the lights of his underſtanding. In this view many practices may and ſhould be adopted, and if I may venture to ſay ſo, many artifices uſed, which are extremely various, according to the diverſity of perſons we have to do with, and the opportunities that offer. Accordingly, it is not poſſible, in a diſcourſe that is devoted to the inſtruction of numbers, to ſay all that is neceſſary for every one in particular to know and to obſerve. We muſt content ourſelves with ſome general rules of prudent conduct in forming the hearts or the moral characters of children, and leave the cloſer adaptation of theſe rules to the diſcretion of ſuch individuals as are actually employed in the application of them.

The firſt rule is this: Study to find out their temperament, and conduct yourſelf according to it. The temperament is, as it were, the ſoil that is to be cultivated, and the diverſity of this ſoil is not ſo great but it may ſoon be diſcovered. More or leſs vivacity and quickneſs of apprehenſion, more or leſs ſenſibility to good and evil, to pleaſure and pain, more or leſs vehemence in the affections, more or leſs diſpoſition to reſt or to activity, in theſe conſiſts the principal diverſity in what may be called the temperament of children. All theſe various temperaments may equally lead either to the virtues or to the vices. To excite and to promote the former and to prevent the latter, is the principal buſineſs of

worthy parents and honeſt tutors. Great vivacity, ſenſibility, activity, are excellent qualities, when they are directed purely to good and proper objects, and have reaſon for their guide. You need not therefore ſtifle or ſuppreſs them, but you muſt ſpare no pains to give them the beſt direction, and to keep them within the bounds of moderation. The vivacity of intellect muſt be employed on important ſciences and uſeful knowledge; the tenderneſs of heart, expanded to a delicate ſenſibility to all that is really beautiful, generous and great; and the activity muſt be ſo conducted as to become an officious zeal for being truly ſerviceable and generally uſeful. Children and young people who have theſe qualities, muſt be frequently and expreſsly cautioned againſt the miſuſe of them, and ſhewn the evil to themſelves and to others that will ariſe from this miſuſe. They, on the other hand, who diſcover greater tardineſs in their ideas and actions, who are more diſpoſed to inaction and ſloth, and are more difficult to be ſet in motion, ſhould not be diſpirited and ſtupified by bitter reproaches or harſh treatment. They are naturally timid, and have little confidence in themſelves. They require therefore to be handled with greater gentleneſs and patience; they ſhould be encouraged, be drawn out of the obſcurity which they ſeek, and be placed frequently in ſuch circumſtances as are adapted to make ſtronger impreſſions upon them, and to give as it were a new impetus to their intellect. Every temper,

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as I have already obſerved, may miſlead to errors. Every appetite may degenerate into inordinate paſſion. Watch carefully over your children, you who have the forming of their hearts, and would conduct them to virtue. Never connive at any failing, and endeavour at its correction as ſoon as it is diſcovered. Strive particularly to repreſs the firſt evil emotions and deſires that ſpring from their temperament; and let not the faulty or the bad, to which they are conſtitutionally moſt prone, ever grow into a habit; and if unhappily this be already the caſe, then let your conſtant and utmoſt endeavour be exerted to conquer it, by repreſenting to them, in the livelieſt manner, the impropriety and the miſchievous effects of it, by depriving them of all opportunities that may ſtrengthen them in it, and by inducing them to the frequent repetition of thoſe actions which are in direct oppoſition to it.

Accuſtom them ſecondly to act from principle and deſign, and not by blind impulſe or mere ſelf-will. Make it comprehenſible to them, that this is the grand prerogative of the human ſpecies over the irrational animals; and that the man who does not make uſe of this prerogative debaſes and degrades himſelf into an inferior claſs of creatures. Often aſk them, not in an authoritative, but in a familiar and friendly way, why they do this, and neglect that; why they eminently eſteem and value certain perſons or things, and deſpiſe and avoid others; why, among ſeveral advantages and amuſements

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that they may have, they chuſe exactly ſuch and no other; what views they have in ſuch or ſuch occupations and exertions, and the like. Endeavour thus to gain their confidence, that they may diſcloſe to you the thoughts of their heart without reſerve; and if, at times, they anſwer your queſtions merely by ſaying, "I do not know," or, "I cannot tell why myſelf," yet let not this incite you to diſpleaſure; but help them to find out the reaſon of their proceedings, of which they themſelves are frequently not clearly conſcious; converſe frankly with them upon the matter in hand, and on the views one may have in ſuch an act; conſult in an amicable manner with them, what were the beſt to be done in ſuch or ſuch events; how a man may moſt eaſily and moſt ſurely attain to certain ends; and when it does not relate to too important matters, let them chuſe themſelves, and let them follow their choice without any interference on your part; but remind them afterwards of the miſtakes they have made, and of the evil conſequences that have ariſen from them. — If, farther, you give them particular orders which you will have obeyed; at the ſame time tell them, if not in all caſes, yet you may in moſt, the true deſigns and views you have in iſſuing ſuch orders. Tell them, why you enjoin this and forbid the other; and endeavour to make them comprehend that your reaſons and deſigns are right and proper. — Do they, in ſhort, require of you an account of your own

own behaviour; do they aſk you, why on ſuch occaſions you act in ſuch a manner; why you ſometimes do what at other times you abſtain from? Theſe queſtions are not uniformly to be rejected, as the effect of a culpable impertinence; nor are you to think, that by anſwering them you give up any thing of the reſpect that is due to you; rather ſhew them, that you conſtantly endeavour to follow the rules of truth and order, of moderation and juſtice; and if you would have them to act from ſagacity and reaſon, take great care that they have no cauſe to ſuſpect that you yourſelf act without reaſon, and are merely ſwayed by caprice.

But thirdly be not ſatisfied with teaching them to act from reaſon, as rational creatures; but teach them to act upon the beſt and nobleſt principles, and in pure and beneficent views. Beware of ſetting only their ambition in motion, and of inciting them to application and duty from no other motive than the idea of the judgment that others paſs on them, and the good or bad opinion of them they ſhall cauſe them to entertain. If once you allow this appetite to become the predominant paſſion, they are loſt to real virtue and to real happineſs. For the greater part, the moſt exalted of the virtues muſt be practiſed in ſecret and without any witneſs; and he that is only happy in the favourable judgment of mankind, can promiſe himſelf but few days perfectly cheerful and pleaſant. No, he alone is virtuous, who, independent on the judgment

judgment and opinion of mankind, is actuated by an efficacious propenſity to whatever is right and good; and he alone can be happy, who can be content with the rectitude of his heart, and the approbation of his conſcience. To this virtue and to this happineſs, ſtrive to conduct your children or your ſcholars, you who are employed in the formation of their hearts. Confer with them at times, whether juſt, equitable, beneficent, magnanimous actions are only rendered by the judgment of the ſpectators juſt, equitable, beneficent and magnanimous actions; whether they are not ſo at all times and in all ſituations; whether they are not ſo even when no one is by to judge and to praiſe them; whether they themſelves have ever repented having done ſome good action in ſecret, whether they have not even then felt a particular ſatisfaction in it; whether there be not an extreme and unalterable difference between truth and lies, between order and diſorder; whether virtue be not productive of harmony and tranquillity as well in the hearts of men as in ſocial life; and whether vice on the contrary is not attended by confuſion and diſcord in both. Aſk them, whether they enjoy the ſame agreeable ſenſations, the ſame ſatisfaction, when they are praiſed on account of thoſe qualities and actions which their own conſcience diſclaims, as when they are commended and applauded for the good they have actually done; and thence teach them to draw this concluſion, that our ſentiments and actions muſt

in themſelves be either good or bad, proper or improper, let them be judged of as they may by the reſt of mankind.

Teach them farther, fourthly, in order to render the ſubject ſtill more comprehenſible to them, to attend to the conſequences of their actions or of their behaviour. Teach them duly to prize that inward peace, the ſatisfaction, the cheerfulneſs of mind, the health and ſtrength of body, their improvement in knowledge or ſkill, the eſteem and honour, and the other advantages which they have reaped from their honeſt and proper conduct. Congratulate them on theſe advantages, and rejoice with them on the occaſion. Sympathiſe, on the other hand, with thoſe who are likely to be deprived of theſe precious benefits by their own fault, and are only unhappy becauſe they have neglected their duty or acted contrary to it. Let them likewiſe, however, feel the bad and pernicious effects of their improper behaviour, as far as is needful for their caution and amendment; and take no pains to free them from ſuch feelings till they have confeſſed and bewailed their raſhneſs and folly. Shew them, one while by their own and at another by extraneous example, what diſorder, what pains and ſickneſſes, what dreadful calamities, intemperance in ſenſual pleaſure, the violence of anger and other paſſions, the want of diligence and induſtry, prodigality and avarice, and all ſins and vices in general, infallibly draw after them; how by little and little they debaſe

debaſe and enfeeble the ſpirit of man, abate his courage, deſtroy his health, ſhorten his life, undermine his outward welfare, reduce him to an unprofitable, contemptible, noxious member of human ſociety, torture his conſcience, and bring upon him trouble, wretchedneſs and diſtreſs in a thouſand different forms. But ſhew them likewiſe on the other hand, what ample rewards the upright and virtuous man finds, in the approbation of his conſcience, in the repoſe of his heart, in the idea of the utility and the pleaſure he procures to his brethren, in the eſteem and love he has a right to expect from them, and in the aſſurance of the divine complacency and favour; how happy he is in acting upon firm and honeſt principles; how happy that he has learnt to govern himſelf and to ſet bounds to his appetites; that he can uſe the faculties both of his mind and body freely and cheerfully to the ends for which they were given him by his maker; that he has no man to avoid, and no man to fear, becauſe he avoids evil and fears God; that he is never diſmayed or dejected at any untoward event; that he knows how to aſſert his real liberty, and is neither the ſlave of habit, of vanity, or his own cupidity. Admire this happineſs of the virtuous on all occaſions and in all its circumſtances before your children, your ſcholars; but do it with a bright and lively countenance, with a ſentimental heart; and let them ſee how much you yourſelf are penetrated with the value of it, how far you prefer it beyond all

riches, all power, all the voluptuouſneſs of the vicious and the vain.

To this rule another is cloſely united, which is this: Strive to make their duty a pleaſure to them. Habituate them to connect duty and pleaſure as intimately together in their ideas as they actually are in nature. Shew them, as much by your example as your precepts, that every duty which we heartily and cheerfully fulfil is compenſated with ſatisfaction and pleaſure. By your example, in giving yourſelf up to the emotions of pure delight in their preſence on having faithfully completed ſome duty. Have you, for example, as a truſtee or a friend, adjuſted the affairs of a widow, of an orphan, of a diſtreſſed friend; have you had an opportunity to reclaim one of your acquaintance from the ways of folly and vice, or occaſioned him to do ſome good action; have you been ſo happy as to comfort and revive ſome diſtreſſed fellow-creature, or to afford ſome effectual relief to a poor ſick perſon; have you diſcharged the duties of your office and calling with remarkably good ſucceſs, or do you perceive it manifeſtly attended by a bleſſing; on your return from theſe generous and delightful occupations, to your children or your ſcholars, let them participate in your ſatisfaction and joy, make them acquainted with the reaſon of it, as far as you can without offence to modeſty; and thus ſhew them how amply a man is rewarded by the conſciouſneſs of having acted with honeſty

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and propriety. Shew them the ſame thing by your inſtructions, by teaching them to remark and to diſtinguiſh the agreeable, the joyful ſenſations which they themſelves experience on ſimilar occaſions; at the ſame time comparing them with the diſſatisfaction, the perturbation, the diſmay, which glide into our hearts againſt our will, when we have not done what we ſhould have done, or have not done it as we ought. — When you exhort them to duty, convince them by your manner, that your aim is not to diſplay your power and authority over them, or to cauſe them unneceſſary pains and trouble, but merely to promote their perfection and their welfare. Acquaint them with virtue, not as an auſtere ſovereign, as the enemy of pleaſure and joy, but as the beſt, as the only ſure means to ſubſtantial happineſs. Never ſay to them, that indeed the vicious man is commonly happier in the world than the virtuous; but notwithſtanding this, that we *muſt* be virtuous, becauſe God has commanded it. No, this ſtatement is falſe, and can only make pernicious impreſſions on minds which are yet not fully capable of diſtinguiſhing the ſemblance of happineſs from happineſs itſelf. Much rather teach them, that we can only be happy by virtue, and miſerable by vice; that God forbids us nothing except what is bad and noxious, and that he requires nothing of us but what is even in this world truly profitable and good; that piety and harmleſs mirth are not at variance, but cheriſh and promote each other; and

that inſtances wherein the upright and the pious have particularly much to ſuffer do not frequently occur.

For facilitating all this to them, for teaching them to act upon principle, to act from the beſt motives, and to be attentive to the conſequences of their actions, and for rendering their duty a pleaſure to them, you ſhould accuſtom them betimes to ſelf-examination, which is the moſt excellent means for conſtantly becoming more wiſe and virtuous. Not that you are to impoſe ſelf-examination on them as a matter of buſineſs, that *muſt* daily be gone through; ſuch conſtraint would ſoon make it hateful and totally uſeleſs to them. Here you will not aſſume ſo much the ſtyle of a ſevere inquiſitor or a ſententious monitor, as that of a friend, who takes an intereſt in all that befalls his friend, who rejoices with him on account of all the good he has done, and manifeſts a hearty ſorrow when he has been ſo unhappy as to do amiſs. And how many opportunities for this practice muſt needs preſent themſelves to attentive parents and preceptors! For example, when ſurrounded by your children, at the cloſe of the day or of the week, when they are delighted and happy in your company, when you let them perceive your tender concern and affection, and thence excite emotions in them of gratitude and reciproeal fondneſs, and have gained their entire confidence; how eaſy is it then to call their attention to recent tranſactions and events, and

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to prompt them to this inveſtigation by ſome ſuch queſtions as theſe: "How have I paſſed this day, or this week? Have I done any thing this day, this week, learnt any thing, or exerciſed myſelf in any thing which gives me real cauſe of ſatisfaction and joy, and which may likewiſe in future be of uſe to myſelf or to others? Have I, during this time, ſo far advanced myſelf in any art, ſcience, or aptitude, as I might have done? or have I done and ſpoken any thing of which I ſhould now be aſhamed, which probably I may long lament, the hurtful conſequences of which I may for a long while feel? Can there be any one who is now ſighing on my account, becauſe I have injured him, or given him an affront? Is there any one now ſuffering pain or hardſhips becauſe I have denied him the relief and aſſiſtance which he implored of me, and which I had it in my power to beſtow? Have I ſaid or done any thing that may have cauſed uneaſineſs, diſſatisfaction, and vexation, to my parents, my teachers, or even to the domeſtics that attend me?" Happy both you and your children, if you thus accuſtom them by little and little to ſelf-examination, if at times you animate them therein by your own example, if you are not aſhamed to confeſs and to deplore your faults in their preſence, at leaſt ſuch as you have committed before them, to lament the neglect of the good act you might have done, to rejoice with them in reflecting on what you actually have performed; and in this manner to teach them

wiſdom and virtue by the contemplation of their behaviour and your own!

Teach them, in like manner, to reap benefit from the conduct of other perſons. Are you with them in company (and it were to be wiſhed that you were ſeldom in company without them), take notice of what is ſaid and done in their preſence, and afterwards enter into an amicable converſation with them upon it. Do this likewiſe as often as they return home from company in which you could not attend them. They themſelves will furniſh you with matter enough for ſuch converſations. Children and young people are commonly more attentive obſervers of what paſſes in their preſence than perſons of riper years. The generality of things have ſtill the charm of novelty for them; and their attention is leſs interrupted than with us, who often come into company poſſeſſed by various cares and intricate concerns. Therefore let your children or your pupils communicate to you the obſervations they have made on ſuch occaſions; and do not prevent them in their judgments by too eagerly obtruding upon them your own. Search out the good or bad impreſſions the diſcourſe they have heard or the behaviour they have witneſſed has left upon them. Endeavour by reaſon and argument to ſtrengthen the good impreſſions they have received, and to weaken or obliterate the bad. Caution them againſt the faults and inadvertencies they have remarked in others. Shew them how injurious theſe

perſons thus are to themſelves, and how much the charms of ſociety are thus diminiſhed. Hold up to them ſuch as have diſtinguiſhed themſelves for their integrity, diſcretion, humility, prudence and philanthropy, as patterns for their imitation; and teach them how reſpectable and amiable they will thus render themſelves to all men. But never allow them to judge their neighbour with ill-natured ſeverity. Accuſtom them much rather to excuſe whatever is excuſable, and to conſider ſuch actions and ſpeeches as are capable of various interpretations always on the favourable ſide. Impoſe it upon them as a duty, never to ſpread any farther what they have ſeen faulty or blameable in another, or to laugh and make merry over it; but merely to apply it to their own caution and improvement. By theſe means you will render their intercourſe with others not only harmleſs to them, but you will make it a uſeful ſchool of wiſdom and virtue.

Finally, to this end call hiſtory likewiſe to your aid. Think not that your children or your ſcholars are ſtudying hiſtory, while they are merely imprinting on their memory a multitude of tranſactions and events of various degrees of importance, with all their circumſtances and effects, that they may be able to repeat them afterwards. The proper end of hiſtory is to make us wiſer and better; it is there we are to ſtudy ourſelves and mankind, if we are to reap any real benefit from it. To this purpoſe however children and young perſons ſhould have a guide,

guide, as they are not yet ſufficiently trained in reflection for ſeeking and finding this utility without the help of others. But by means of this guidance, hiſtory may afford them the ſame advantage they procure from their own experience; and this benefit they will in fact reap from it in a much eaſier and leſs hazardous manner. Aſk them therefore frequently, while engaged in this ſtudy, what they think of theſe or thoſe ſentiments and actions of mankind; why they pronounce theſe to be juſt, reaſonable, generous, beneficent; and thoſe on the contrary, unjuſt, baſe, cruel, or inhuman; why they contemplate one with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, but the other with conſternation and horror; why they take more intereſt in the fortunes of one perſon than in thoſe of another? Aſk them what they themſelves would have done in ſuch or ſuch a predicament; how they would have determined; which party they would have eſpouſed; whether they would have neglected that opportunity of doing right, and whether they could have reſiſted that inducement to do wrong? Apply all that they read and hear to themſelves, and to the particular circumſtances in which they are at preſent, or are likely to be placed hereafter. Teach them conſtantly to obſerve their own hearts, to trace out its latent propenſities; and if theſe propenſities are irregular and bad, ſo much the earlier and more valiantly to combat them, ſince they now ſo ſtrikingly perceive from what happens to others, to what exceſſes and enormities

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theſe propenſities may impel the man who fondly ſubmits to their ſway. In this manner will hiſtory at once amuſe, inſtruct and improve them; it will be an excellent means of forming their heart, and of making them morally good.

We ſhould now proceed to the particular virtues to which children and young people are principally to be led, and in which they are conſtantly to be exerciſed. But the time already elapſed, and the abundance of the matter, allow me not at preſent to enter upon that important part of education. This, under favour of God, is what I deſign for the ſubject of my next Sunday's diſcourſe.

I ſhall therefore conclude the preſent with an obſervation, the juſtneſs whereof no attentive hearer of what I have already advanced on this ſubject will call into doubt. It is this: If, as we ſaw in our former diſcourſe, the formation of the minds of children be an arduous taſk, the formation of their hearts is a no leſs ſerious and difficult enterpriſe. It demands great attention, unremitted induſtry, and unwearied patience; it demands much circumſpection and prudence. Parents and preceptors ſhould keep a conſtant guard upon themſelves no leſs than upon their children; obſerve every good or bad affection as it diſcloſes itſelf to view; uſe every opportunity for ſtrengthening the one and weakening the other; eſteem nothing as trifling that may have an influence on their moral character; blend inſtruction and practice conſtantly together,

together, and give force and energy to both by their own example; always act upon the ſame principles, and immoveably proſecute the ſame deſign, though they ſhould every day meet with new obſtructions on the way that conducts them to it. He that purſues this buſineſs as the amuſement of a leiſure hour; he who thinks to accompliſh every thing by precept and command; he who treats his children or his ſcholars, not as rational creatures, which are to be enlightened and moved by remonſtrance to goodneſs, but as machines which require only to be jogged and puſhed forward; he who does not readily condeſcend to their weakneſs, and often mentally put himſelf in their place, for better adapting his inſtruction and his diſcipline to their comprehenſion and wants; he who proceeds one way to-day, and to-morrow another — to-day with an exceſſive indulgence, and with as exceſſive a ſeverity to-morrow; he who allows himſelf to be deterred by the firſt difficulties he encounters, by the firſt unſucceſsful attempt, from proceeding with diligence, and has not fortitude enough to work whole years with the ſame aſſiduity, though as yet he ſees no particular fruit of his labours: he will not indeed advance far in this important and toilſome buſineſs; but he has no one to blame except himſelf, if his too much interrupted, erroneous and ſelf-deſtroying labours are almoſt all in vain. Let me addreſs a word or two to you in particular who have the happineſs to be mothers. You may contribute moſt

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to the formation of the hearts of your children. You may labour at it daily and hourly, and your tender love alone can overcome the difficulties attendant on it. But if you diſcharge your duty in this particular in its whole extent, you render yourſelves far more uſeful than our ſex, and contribute far more to the happineſs of it than all of us can do, whatever office we may fill, in whatever ſtation we may be placed.

SERMON III.

Of training up Children to the Primary Virtues in particular.

GOD, how is it poſſible for us not to perceive, and perceiving not properly to value the eminent endowments which thou haſt vouchſafed mankind above the other inhabitants of the earth! Thou haſt exalted us far above the beaſts of the field, and made us little lower than the angels! While they, the beaſts of the field, are entirely ſenſual, cleave entirely to the ground and are irreſiſtibly drawn by their inſtincts; we can reſiſt our ſenſuality, controul its moſt violent impulſes and ſtimulations, govern ourſelves, riſe above the terreſtrial and viſible, aſcend even to thee, and do what we perceive to be right and good and fitteſt for the occaſion. If they exiſt and live only in the preſent moment, and neither can learn wiſdom from reflection on the paſt, nor derive hope and conſolation from proſpects into futurity; yet we in our thoughts can connect the paſt, the preſent and the future, and thus

thus multiply our exiſtence and our life, and with perſpicuous conſciouſneſs rejoice therein. If they in a very ſhort time are and become all that they are able to be and to become: yet thou haſt made us capable of becoming always more intelligent, always wiſer, always better, always happier, and of always advancing nearer to thee, the fount of intellect, of wiſdom, of goodneſs, of felicity. Yes, we are thy offspring! As thy children we are formed after thy image! We have affinity with the angels, are brethren of Jeſus thy firſt-born ſon! We are ennobled by reaſon and liberty! We are capable of an ever increaſing, of an infinitely progreſſive perfection! We are deſigned for immortality! — And ſhall we leave our nobleſt faculties unemployed, or not make the beſt uſe of them which we can in our ſtation and poſition? And ſhall we content ourſelves with any, ever ſo low a degree of wiſdom and virtue, while we can proceed ſo far, ſo immenſely far in both? What! ſhall we forget our affinity with ſuperior ſpirits, and with Jeſus Chriſt their chief, our relation and communion with God, our deſtination to immortality? No, never will we forget the dignity and the nobleneſs of our nature, never our origin from thee, the father of ſpirits, never our bleſſed connection with thee. No, the thought and the ſentiment that we are human beings, that we are formed after the image of God, that we are capable of ſo great perfection and happineſs, ſhall deter us from every folly, preſerve us from every

every ſin, and render us apt and expert in every good work. Support us in theſe reſolutions, o gracious and merciful father, by the genial influences of thy holy ſpirit, that we may comfortably and conſcientiouſly tranſact the affairs of life, innocently and cheerfully enjoy its ſatisfactions, and patiently bear its troubles and afflictions! Grant that we may more and more intimately feel the worth of our high diſtinctions and be continually more happy in the uſe and enjoyment of them! Theſe our petitions we offer up unto thee in the name of our ſaviour Jeſus, and conclude our ſupplications in his words; Our father, &c.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

HABITS of virtue are of the ſame nature with dexterity in the mechanical or other arts. Would we acquire this dexterity, we muſt exerciſe ourſelves early and conſtantly whether in the virtues or the arts; we muſt learn to eſteem and love them in early youth, and thence they will gradually become ſo eaſy and ſo natural, that at length we ſhall find it difficult to do any thing contrary to the rules of art, or the precepts of virtue. As little as that man merits the appellation of a good artiſt, who only now and then produces a good piece; ſo little does

does he deſerve the name of a virtuous man, who only thinks and acts at times virtuouſly, as it were by chance, and at the expence of great pains. Hence you may conclude, how neceſſary it is for us to train up children to virtue with all poſſible care from their earlieſt infancy, and continually to exerciſe them in it, if we would have them truly virtuous perſons. And this in fact is one of the moſt important articles in rational and chriſtian education, and herein the formation of their hearts or their moral character principally conſiſts.

In our laſt diſcourſe we ſaw what was in general requiſite to this end, and how we are to ſet about this formation of the hearts of children. Namely, we ſhould find out their temperament, and conduct ourſelves accordingly; we ſhould habituate them to act from principle and deſign, and not from blind impulſe, or mere caprice; we ſhould teach them to act upon good, upon the beſt principles, and to be attentive to the conſequences of their actions; we ſhould ſtrive to make their duty their pleaſure. For the promotion of theſe views, we ſhould initiate them in ſelf-examination, and do our utmoſt to make their intercourſe with others, and their ſtudy of hiſtory, conducive to their improvement.

To theſe general rules, we will to-day ſubjoin a few that ſhall more eſpecially relate to the chief particular virtues to which children and young perſons ſhould be trained up by thoſe whoſe

duty it is to form their hearts or their moral characters.

The firſt of theſe rules is this: Inure them from their earlieſt infancy to obedience and ſubmiſſion. He that has not learnt this in his childhood and youth is unhappy for the reſt of his life. All of us are occaſionally brought into ſituations where it is neceſſary for us to ſubmit, where we muſt comply, if we would not run counter to our duties, or bring harm upon ourſelves and others. Either we muſt avoid human ſociety altogether, renounce all its advantages and pleaſures, and take up our abode in the holes of the rock, or the dens of the foreſt; or we muſt ſacrifice a part of our natural liberty to the ſecurity and quiet enjoyment of the reſt, ſubject ourſelves to certain reſtraints, and alternately yield to each other. But how unfit muſt he be for this, who has, for ten, fifteen, or a greater number of years, unmoleſtedly followed his own inclinations, who has ſuffered no oppoſition, whoſe wiſhes for every thing he ſaw were ſo many commands uniformly ſubmitted to by the blind indulgence of his parents and tutors, and who now all at once muſt adopt a quite different courſe of action! The time is arrived when he muſt make his entrance into the world. At every ſtep he meets with obſtructions. His wiſhes are ſcarcely noticed, while he expects to ſee all men running to fulfil them. They much rather openly oppoſe his deſires and aims. His vanity

vanity and arrogance will be offended one while in this manner and then in another; but the diſeaſe is too inveterate to admit of a cure. Unfortunate man! Deplorable victim of extreme fondneſs and indulgence! How often, when once thou comeſt to reflection, how often wilt thou lament this cruel tenderneſs! How often wilt thou wiſh that thy parents, thy preceptors, had exerted their proper authority over thee, and taught thee obedience! O ye parents, would you ſpare your children theſe ſighs, theſe complaints, and the miſeries that extort them; inure them to diſcipline, I ſay, to diſcipline, for by precept and exhortation alone you will never ſucceed; exerciſe them in obedience and ſubmiſſion. Allow yourſelves to be eaſily prevailed on; frequently go before their requeſts, when they aſk for things innocent and good; and ſhew them by facts how much you have their real ſatisfaction and their real happineſs at heart; but never ſhould they obtain any thing from you by force; never yield to their impetuoſity or clamour; let not the tears of ſtubbornneſs melt you to an ill-timed compaſſion. Enjoin them nothing without mature deliberation, without ſufficient reaſon; let the juſtice, the equity, the indulgence that is due to their age and weakneſs, be the rule of all your commands; but when once you have delivered them, never think of a repeal, but abſolutely inſiſt on the moſt punctual and unreſerved compliance; and let neither headſtrong oppoſition, nor artful flattery, move you to the revo-

cation of them. Beware however of iſſuing too many, or too different orders at once. You will thereby lay an inſupportable yoke on their necks, and in ſome meaſure compel them to diſobedience; or you will make timid vaſſals of them, impatiently waiting for the moment when they may miſuſe their freedom without reproof or obſervation. Leave therefore to their own option whatever is in itſelf indifferent and can have no prejudicial influence on their morals; and be content ſometimes in furniſhing them with uſeful ſuggeſtions and reaſons by which they may determine for themſelves. Imitate herein the great lawgiver of the univerſe. Conſider how much he has left to our free-agency, and how greatly he has thus facilitated our obedience to his commands! The neglect of this rule, my friends, is the principal cauſe that ſo few children learn obedience. If we will be always heaping command upon command, and regulating as it were every poſture, every word, every look, every motion of the child, or the youth, by law, we ourſelves cannot be attentive to all theſe commands, and muſt of neceſſity paſs over many tranſgreſſions of our laws in ſilence; and by this means the reſt of our laws and ordinances, even the weightieſt of them, loſe their force, and diſobedience becomes habitual.

Farther, inſpire your children with a predominant love for truth, for ſincerity and frankneſs. Theſe qualities are all natural to them. You need only cheriſh them. You need only not ſuppreſs them.

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Never therefore laugh at their honeſt ſimplicity. Take heed leſt by ſo doing you train them to diſſimulation, to falſehood, to flattery. A lamentable neceſſity will teach them in due time, not to ſay all they think; but woe to them and to you, if they learn to ſay the reverſe of what they think. The man who has been brought up in his childhood and youth to falſehood, to diſſimulation, to flattery, to whom theſe vices have been recommended as the primary rules of diſcretion and of polite manners, will almoſt always become either a noxious or a very troubleſome and diſagreeable member of ſociety. He will thence inure himſelf to artifice and deceit, and in his dealings with others will not ſcruple to make uſe of every trick and device he can think of which is not expreſsly forbidden by law. He will be exceedingly fickle in his judgments, and will commend and eſteem to-day what yeſterday he condemned and deſpiſed. He will be liberal in his marks of reſpect and profeſſions of friendſhip even to prodigality, and yet thinks of nothing leſs than the performance of them, unleſs ſtimulated to it by neceſſity or ſelf-intereſt. He will never dare to oppoſe unjuſt and corrupt undertakings and actions, if originating with perſons to whom he is uſed meanly to crouch and cringe. He will in ſhort be incapable of true friendſhip, which not only diſdains all falſehood, but even diſlikes reſerve: and what a comfort of life, what pure ſatisfactions, is he thus kept a ſtranger to! Do we not even daily complain

of the very faults and imperfections of ſocial life which I have juſt been ſpeaking of? Why then ſhould we propagate them to future generations? Why are they recommended to children and young perſons as good qualities and as virtues? Why is it ſo frequently imputed to them as a crime when they ſpeak the truth, or on any ſubject diſcloſe the thoughts of their heart? Why praiſe, why reward them with particular regard and affection, when they artfully admire and repeat whatever they ſee and hear, for the ſake of inſinuating themſelves into the good graces of others? Oh avoid all theſe too common faults, you who are parents and tutors. Train up your children, not to be ſervile ſycophants, but to be noble-minded men, who know how to value themſelves, who love truth above all things, and never are ſhy of ſpeaking it whenever their duty or the benefit of others requires it; and be aſſured, that no upright, ſincere, open-hearted man ever lamented that he was upright, ſincere, and open-hearted, that he was a foe to all diſſimulation and flattery. — On the other hand however ſeek to preſerve your children from prating and babbling. Teach them, in their judgments and diſcourſes, to proceed with caution and conſideration. Shew them how much uneaſineſs we may by this means occaſion to ourſelves and others; and how diſagreeable a man muſt be to company, when he ſeems reſolved to be the only ſpeaker, and ſtuns them with all the thoughts and ſtories he can croud

together, whether good or bad, without diſtinction. Accuſtom them to ſecrecy in regard to ſuch things as duty forbids them to reveal. Entruſt them at times with a ſecret; and let the manner of their procedure with it be the rule of the greater or ſmaller degree of confidence with which you ſhall afterwards honour them.

Train them thirdly as early as poſſible, to diligence, to method, and to induſtry in their affairs. Repreſent to them how juſt and reaſonable it is, that every one ſhould make the beſt uſe of his talents, of his abilities, of his time and of his property; and how unjuſt it would be, to require the aſſiſtance of ſo many other perſons, without granting them all poſſible ſervice and help in return. Shew them how intimately all mankind are connected together; how much one man has need of another; and how advantageous it is for each in particular, and for all in general, that they ſtrive with ſocial ardour to promote their mutual welfare. Teach them how much a man facilitates his buſineſs by method and regularity; how much eſteem and confidence it procures him from others; how richly unabated induſtry at laſt repays him; what an excellent means application is for preſerving us from ſins and follies and from the inſupportable burden of a languid mind; and how pure, how great the pleaſure of the induſtrious man, when he reflects on the work he has duly finiſhed, on the difficulties he has overcome in the progreſs of it, and on the utility

he has procured by it to himſelf and to others. Would you deeply impreſs theſe maxims on your children, and at the ſame time go before them with your example; would you keep them conſtantly employed in ſome uſeful occupation, as much as their age and their powers allow; teach them to adapt every particular to its proper time, and ſee that all they have to do and to provide for be done and provided for with due preciſion: the love of order and diligence will by this means become natural to them; they cannot thenceforward be other than orderly and diligent; they will not in future regard the affairs of their calling as a grievous burden, and poſtpone them to every fleeting amuſement; and thus they will be far more ſecurely preſerved from indigence and penury, and rendered far more uſeful members of ſociety, than by your leaving them never ſo great riches, with contrary diſpoſitions.

Fourthly, be very careful to bring them up to humility and modeſty, which are ſo becoming in all men, and eſpecially in children and young perſons, and at the ſame time are ſo neceſſary for the advancement of their perfection and happineſs. Praiſe them not on account of ſuch privileges as they have not themſelves acquired, but are indebted for merely to their birth or ſtation; and allow not others to inſpire them with high notions of their deſcent, or of their opulence. Teach them to conſider all ſuch as honour and extol them on theſe accounts

accounts as baſe flatterers, or as ignorant and ſelf-intereſted people, who either think quite differently from what they ſpeak or are endeavouring by this means to ſerve their own private ends. Shew them how little real value theſe outward diſtinctions have, how eaſily they may be loſt; how much they oblige their poſſeſſor to an eminently good and generally uſeful conduct; and how deſpicable they render him, if he either miſapply them or be ſtill leſs virtuous and uſeful than another, who has neither ſo many means nor ſo many incitements to it. Neither however muſt you plume yourſelves on ſuch diſtinctions; deſpiſe not the poor and needy, and honour only wiſdom and virtue and integrity, whether environed by the glare of proſperity, or accompanied with want and miſery. Give them a modeſt opinion likewiſe of their natural or acquired endowments, diſpoſitions, abilities and virtues. Teach them how ignorant and feeble man is in himſelf; how dependent he is in all reſpects on the will of the great author of nature; how ſoon, by a hundred accidents, he may be hurled down from the dangerous height to which he has climbed. Teach them, how imperfect and inſignificant the greateſt human knowledge and virtue is; how likewiſe in this reſpect the major part is obtained from inſtruction, from education, from outward circumſtances, and all ultimately from the providence of the Almighty. Shew them how far they are excelled in all theſe matters by ſo many others, who probably

probably have had fewer helps and encouragements; and how much they have ſtill to do, for becoming ſo wiſe and good as they may and ſhould become. — Exerciſe them in meekneſs, principally whenever they think themſelves affronted, or when they have not met with that reſpect and honour to which they imagine they have a right to pretend. Remind them now of their own infirmities and failings, of their deficiency of all poſitive merit, of the great candour they themſelves ſtand in need of from others, of the inconſiderateneſs with which moſt men ſpeak and act. Make them comprehend, how liable we are, even without any bad intention, without being of a malicious diſpoſition, merely from imprudence and indiſcretion, to ſay or do ſomething that ſhall diſpleaſe another, and is ſuſceptible of a very bad interpretation; and ever beware of rendering their little differences of importance, by your taking too great a part in them, and treating them as things that highly deſerve attention, or that bring your own honour in queſtion. — Exerciſe them much rather, on all occaſions, in placability and magnanimity. Inſtead of addreſſing them, as it but too frequently happens, in ſuch terms as theſe — "This is what you ſhould never put up with, you ſhould not let that paſs unrequited, unfriendly behaviour ſhould be returned with the like" — much rather let this be your advice: "You ſhould be above regarding ſuch trifles; they are not worth your notice, much leſs your uneaſineſs; think your-

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ſelf happy if you are wiſer and better than another; and pity ſuch as are leſs wiſe and good than you, but hate them not." — In this manner let not your children live long in diſagreement with each other or with other perſons. Shew them rather how irkſome and unpleaſant ſuch a ſituation is, and of how much ſatisfaction and benefit it deprives them. When any diſſention has ariſen, bring them together, and repreſent to them how inſignificant the ground of their diſagreement is, and how eaſily they might have ſeen that themſelves, if they had more deeply inveſtigated the matter, and not have taken it up in ſo much haſte. Abſolutely forbid them all revenge, even when the object of it is only an animal or ſome inanimate thing; and teach them, as ſoon as they are able to comprehend it, that only the ſentiment of guilt and weakneſs ſuggeſts revenge; but that conſcious innocence and power are diſplayed in magnanimity.

Endeavour to inſpire them fifthly with a ſincere affection and hearty good-will towards all mankind, without diſtinction of rank, of religion, of country, or of outward fortune. Teach them to regard all men as their brethren, the ſmall as well as the great, the poor as well as the rich; to treat man as man, that is, as a rational and immortal creature, and his outward circumſtances as accidental objects. Impreſs upon them deeply the natural equality of all men, that they may not be dazzled by the glare of power, of rank, or riches; that they may not be betrayed

betrayed into meanneſs or obduracy, into pride or cruelty. Never allow them to talk of mean, low, vulgar people, and to accompany what they ſay with contemptuous looks and geſtures. Theſe expreſſions are culpable in the mouth of every ſenſible man; they are the offspring of error and vice: but in the mouth of a child or a youth, they are abſolute folly and abſurdity. If your children or your ſcholars are accuſtomed to uſe theſe expreſſions, then ſhew them, that the perſons whom they term vulgar, low, mean people, poſſeſs far greater merit, and are far more important and uſeful members of the community, and conſequently deſerve more reſpect and honour than they; and that it is ſtill very uncertain whether they themſelves may not, by their own ill-conduct or even by unmerited misfortunes, be reduced to that ſame low claſs of people, and ſee themſelves forced to ſeek compaſſion and relief from thoſe whom they now, without foundation, think ſo vile. Watch carefully, in this reſpect, over their behaviour towards the ſervants. Think it no ſubject of connivance, if they treat them with ſcorn, with arrogance, ſpeak to them in a haughty and imperative tone, and take upon them the hard and ſelf-conceited maſter, whom it is their duty implicitly to obey. Teach them on the contrary to acknowledge the value of the ſervice the domeſtics adminiſter to their weakneſs and inexperience, and to acknowledge it with thankfulneſs; inſpire them with liberal and beneficent ſentiments towards them; and if they dare to command them

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in your preſence, then do you ſee that their commands are not executed. — Preſerve them likewiſe in their earlieſt years, from that coldneſs, from that envy and malignity, which difference of nation and religion is but too apt to excite among mankind. Teach them, that it is not the apparel, not the outward manners and uſages, not opinions, but character and conduct, that fix the true value of individuals; that inſtruction, education and accident, have a great ſhare in the opinions and the belief of the generality of mankind; that no one errs on purpoſe, or rejects the truth as truth; that more depends on doing than on knowing; that man is not condemnable for error, but for vice; that every one ſhould follow the dictates of his conſcience, even though they ſhould be erroneous; and that "there is no reſpect of perſons with God; but, that in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him."

At the ſame time neglect not to train them to compaſſion and beneficence. But would you frame their hearts to theſe virtues; repreſent them not only as very beautiful and noble, but teach them actually to know the various kinds of want and miſery under which ſo many of their brethren ſigh. Lead them at times into the ſad but inſtructive abodes of the poor, the ſick and the dying. There let them form a compariſon between their condition and that of ſo many others who have the ſame nature with them, and probably are more deſerving than

than they. Let them ſee the famiſhed looks and haggard figure, the hard couch and the hard bread, of the poor and needy, and hear their piteous moans. Keep them not away from ſuch affecting ſights, for fear of ſhocking their delicate nerves, or cauſing them painful ſenſations. Theſe ſenſations are the glory of human nature. Rejoice and be glad when they appear in your children; let them give full ſcope to their pitying tears; conceal not from them your own; and ſhew them by your example, that you are not aſhamed of theſe honourable tears even at your manly age. But then ſhare with them likewiſe the pleaſure of beneficence and relief which you afford to the indigent and forlorn. Conſult with them at times on the beſt means of adminiſtering comfort. Repreſent it to them as a peculiar honour you pay to their good behaviour, that you take them with you in this or that labour of chriſtian love. Accuſtom them occaſionally to curtail a little of their pleaſures or accommodations, that they may the more effectually relieve thoſe who are in want of the neceſſaries of life. Make them underſtand betimes that the beneficence which coſts us nothing, or conſiſts only in giving away what we could not uſe ourſelves, what was totally ſuperfluous and unneceſſary to us, that this beneficence is of no great value, that it cannot be a virtue. Reward them therefore even for their beneficence, not by making them preſents, but by partaking in the joy of the poor and the neceſſitous whom they have relieved,

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of the ſick whom they have reſtored, of the ſorrowful whom they have comforted, and by acquainting them with what fulneſs of heart they bleſs their benefactor.

Teach them, farther, to deny themſelves, and to maintain the command over their ſenſual appetites. In this reſpect likewiſe combine practice with precept, and begin with both of them as early as poſſible. This is a matter of the utmoſt importance for creatures like us, who are partly ſenſual and partly rational. He who has not learnt in his early years to reſiſt his ſenſual appetites, will find it extremely difficult in his riper age, if not abſolutely impoſſible, to make thoſe ſacrifices to duty and virtue, which are ſo frequently demanded of us in the preſent ſtate of diſcipline and probation. Therefore, habituate your children, or thoſe that are entruſted to your care and direction, willingly at times to deny themſelves ſome innocent gratification, or to retire abruptly from the enjoyment of it, in order to prove the ſtrength of their minds, and the maſtery they have obtained over themſelves. In this particular likewiſe precede them by your example. Appoint a time for certain pleaſures or diverſions, which you intend to enjoy in their company; enter heartily into the ſport with them; and then, if ſome duty or accidental circumſtance, which you yourſelf however have perhaps previouſly planned, interrupt the enjoyment of theſe pleaſures, or call you from them, ſhew them immediately, by your unruffled complacency,

cency, and by an affectionate admonition, how far you prefer your duty to all pleaſures, and how much it behoves us to be able to bridle our deſires, and to govern ourſelves. Requeſt them on this occaſion, to exerciſe themſelves in theſe noble virtues, or at leaſt to embrace this opportunity for giving you an unequivocal demonſtration of their attachment; and reward thoſe who do ſo the moſt readily with diſtinguiſhed marks of eſteem and friendſhip. If it at firſt appear difficult and irkſome to them to do ſo much violence to themſelves, if it even coſt them great trouble to refrain from tears, and from breaking out in loud complaints; let not any ill-timed pity induce you to ſave them this trouble. The oftener they adopt this ſalutary practice, the eaſier it will become; and you will at length enable them to make the moſt coſtly ſacrifices to virtue and rectitude, without heſitation, whenever their duty demands it.

Train them finally to patience in ſufferings, to fortitude and courage in misfortune, to a ſteady and intrepid behaviour in all ſituations. Theſe qualities and virtues are indiſpenſably neceſſary to us in our preſent ſtate. He that has not learnt to ſuffer with calmneſs and reſignation; he that allows himſelf to be ſhaken and put off his bias by every petty accident; he who ſhudders and recoils at every menace, at every appearance of danger; will never attain to any high degree of moral perfection, and his happineſs is very liable to many and ſudden reverſes.

Only

Only the patient, the reſolute, the intrepid, are capable of overcoming the difficulties that are occaſionally met with on the path of duty and rectitude, of effectually ſtemming the torrent of prevailing depravity, and of preſerving their innocence as well as their inward ſerenity in all the viciſſitudes and temptations of outward fortune. To theſe virtues however we muſt be early trained; we muſt learn firſt to practiſe them in trivial matters, if we would do ſo afterwards in riper years and more important emergencies. Therefore content not yourſelves with recommending theſe manly, theſe noble virtues, to your children or your pupils, but exerciſe them in them on all occaſions. Let not your fondneſs for them induce you by too great indulgence to ſpoil their taſte, to ſpare them in every thing that is troubleſome and unpleaſant, and ſo to accuſtom them to ſoftneſs and effeminacy. Inure them much rather to a hardy kind of life, ſo as that none of the accommodations of it may be ſo neceſſary to them, that they cannot be deprived of them without being wretched. Do they meet with any trifling miſchance; are obliged to ſuffer ſome hardſhip or pain; do they loſe ſuch things as they greatly valued: increaſe not their ſenſibility to the event by the extravagant and anxious concern you take in it, by the lamentations you make on the occaſion, by the extraordinary buſtle in which you put yourſelf and all about you, to conſole them in their miſhap, to compenſate their loſs, and inſtantaneouſly to remove

their very tolerable pains. Give not to ſuch things as are of no great conſequence a greater importance in their eyes than they really have, by the manner in which you view and treat them. Rather ſeek by your calmneſs to quiet them, and by your ſedateneſs to inſpire them with courage. Teach them to hold every object for what it actually is; diſcourſe amicably with them on the nature of the affliction they ſuffer, of the pain they feel, of the loſs they have ſuſtained; ſhew them to how many diſaſters and calamities man is ſubject, and how much he may bear and ſuffer if he will. Quote to them examples of perſons who have ſuffered far more than they, and were yet patient and reſolute; and inſtead of terrifying them by calling their attention to all the poſſible bad effects of their preſent misfortune, teach them by degrees to obſerve the various uſes a wiſe and virtuous man may draw even from the adverſities that befall him. But give efficacy and vigour likewiſe to theſe doctrines by your own example. Bear the afflictions you meet with yourſelf with patience; let them never hear any murmurs and repinings at the divine diſpenſations proceed from your mouth; ſhew them by your own behaviour, that you can be tranquil under tribulations, and meet with compoſure and fortitude a danger which you cannot avoid. Preſerve them laſtly as much as poſſible, from all impreſſions of fear and dread ariſing from ſuch objects as only ignorance, or ſuperſtition, or melancholy, or ſlaviſh notions, have endued

dued with a frightful and terrific appearance. Shew them theſe objects whenever an opportunity occurs; make them acquainted with them, and lay before them in the livelieſt colours the imbecility and miſery of thoſe who are always dreaming of dangers, and deſcrying objects of terror on every ſide.

Theſe, pious hearers, are the principal virtues to which children and young people ſhould be trained, and in which they ſhould be conſtantly exerciſed. Would you, whom heaven has appointed to be parents, or preceptors, or teachers, reſolutely and faithfully follow the rules I have here laid down, frequently and properly practiſe the diſcipline connected with them, and never be weary in imploring God for his bleſſing; then certainly your labours will not be in vain; they will ſooner or later produce rich fruits of wiſdom and virtue in the hearts and in the conduct of ſuch as are placed under your inſpection and care. Your children, your ſcholars, will be habituated to obedience and ſubmiſſion, to ſincerity and the love of truth, to diligence, to induſtry and regularity in their affairs; they will be humble and modeſt, will love all men as their brethren, ſeek their ſatisfaction in doing good, govern themſelves, and reſiſt the violence of their ſenſual appetites; they will learn even patience in afflictions, fortitude in adverſity and intrepidity in dangers. And how wiſe, how good, how happy muſt they be, in the delightful company of the faireſt and nobleſt virtues! How much muſt theſe virtues exalt the

luſtre or ſupply the defect of outward diſtinctions! How will they conciliate the favour both of God and man; how beneficial will they be to their brethren! How much more calmly and contentedly will you leave them hereafter, knowing that they have theſe, and with them all the other virtues as the guides and companions of their lives!

SERMON IV.

Of training up Children to Religion and to Chriſtianity.

GOD, from whom, through whom and to whom are all things, Creator, Benefactor and Father of mankind, to know thee, to love thee, to obey thee, is our higheſt honour and our greateſt happineſs. This alone it is that confers upon us a real, an eſſential precedence over the inferior creatures, which with us inhabit the earth. It is this alone that diffuſes light and joy and hope and conſolation over the dark and toilſome path of our terreſtrial life. It is this alone that opens to our view ſuch proſpects in the future world, that make us forget all the troubles of the preſent. Yes, o God, in knowing thee, we know the ſource and aggregate of whatever is great, whatever is good, whatever is beautiful and perfect. In loving thee, we love him, who unites in himſelf, whatever merits our veneration, our gratitude, our affection and our confidence. In obeying thee, we obey the wiſeſt, the moſt righteous, the kindeſt ſovereign, whoſe laws tend ſolely to our good. Oh that we always perceived, always felt this truth, and always acted conſiſtently with that perception

and feeling; oh that we might always conſider and employ religion, which alone confers this prerogative on our nature, and conducts us to thoſe ſources of wiſdom and happineſs, conſiſtently with theſe views? Do thou aſſiſt us, o merciful father, to fulfil with ever greater exactitude our duty, which is at the ſame time our felicity. Teach us thyſelf, ever better to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent, and let our knowledge be continually more fruitful in devout ſentiments and good works. Let us do honour to the doctrine, which thou haſt revealed to us and which we confeſs with our mouths, by a virtuous and holy life, and grant particularly to thoſe among us who are employed in the education of children, the grace to infuſe into their hearts above all things the reverence and love of thee and to train them up into ſincere followers of thy ſon. Bleſs to this end the conſiderations which are now to employ us, and hearken to our prayer for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our mediator and ſaviour, in whoſe name we farther addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

EPHES. vi. 4.

Ye fathers, — bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

THE moſt faithful obſervance of all the precepts and practices which we have been recommending to you, in ſeveral diſcourſes on forming the minds

minds and the hearts of children, will not be ſufficient, pious hearers, for completing the grand deſign of a rational and chriſtian education, unleſs it be connected with as exact and careful a training to religion and to chriſtianity. No otherwiſe will theſe precepts and practices be truly uſeful and important. No otherwiſe will the underſtanding of the man be formed to true wiſdom, and his heart to real, to the nobleſt virtue. No otherwiſe will he be capable of the ſupreme, of eternal happineſs. "The fear of the Lord," ſays holy ſcripture, "that is wiſdom; and," from the fear of the Lord, "to depart from evil, that is underſtanding." And in fact, my friends, without that clear and certain light which religion and chriſtianity hold before us on the moſt important objects, without the powerful conſiderations by which they ſtimulate us to what is right and good, without the force which they communicate to us for diſcharging our duty, it would fare very ill with our wiſdom and virtue. They would be like a building, reſting if not upon ſand, yet certainly on no ſolid foundation. We ſhould be continually running the hazard of perplexing ourſelves in our concluſions, and of being cheated and miſguided by our ſenſes, by our imagination, by our paſſions. But few, for I will grant every thing that can in this reſpect be granted, but few would be wiſe and virtuous; and even theſe few would not proceed ſo far either in wiſdom or in virtue as a chriſtian, who does honour to the appel-

lation, may advance in both. Nothing then is of greater neceſſity than that children and young people ſhould be introduced betimes and in the beſt manner to religion and chriſtianity, if they are to be rendered as wiſe, as good, as generally uſeful and as happy, as they are capable of becoming. This is likewiſe what the apoſtle Paul in our text inculcates upon fathers, or in general to parents, when he ſays: "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That is, form them into ſcholars of our lord Jeſus Chriſt; inſtruct them in his doctrine, exerciſe them in obedience to his commands and in the imitation of his example; ſo bring them up, that they may become his true diſciples and followers, that they may be ſincere and enlightened chriſtians.

My deſign at preſent, pious hearers, is to give you, by the divine aſſiſtance and bleſſing, ſome direction to this purpoſe; a direction the more neceſſary, as the generality of parents and preceptors are ſo negligent on this important article of education, and as the miſtakes committed in it are the more various and common. Nobody denies that children and young people ought to be brought up to religion and to chriſtianity, and that much depends upon it; but what is done for complying with this duty? They are firſt made to learn by rote ſome, generally difficult and unintelligible forms of prayer; after this, a ſhorter or a longer ſyſtem of church-doctrines, with ſome ſcripture commonplaces, for the

the greateſt part very obſcure; they are forced with much labour to imprint on their memory ſubjects which they do not at all underſtand, and thus not unfrequently theſe ſubjects are rendered diſguſting and loathſome to them, who ought on the contrary to be taught to prize and to love them. Afterwards theſe ſubjects, which becauſe they can talk upon they imagine themſelves to underſtand, are expounded to them; and this is generally done in ſuch a manner, that they are more convinced of their own dependency and ſubjection, than of the importance and excellency of the matter of their inſtruction. In the mean time they are occaſionally exhorted, uſually between whiles and in much too general a manner, to fear God and to be good; by which is meant that they ſhould habitually go to church, and bring home the text on which the preacher diſcourſed, or if called upon, be able to repeat ſome general heads of the ſermon, without any farther concern whether they have underſtood ſomething of the diſcourſe at large and applied it to their own inſtruction and improvement or not; and when they are of proper age for confirmation they are previouſly ſent a few times to the miniſter of the pariſh, for ſome farther inſtruction, and at length ſolemnly admitted into the congregation; and then it is thought that all has been done which chriſtian parents can and ought to do, for bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But does it require much attention and ſagacity to perceive

perceive the imperfection of ſuch an initiation in religion and in chriſtianity, and does not daily experience teach us, how inſufficient all this is towards forming children and young people into real chriſtians? No, to train up children and young people to religion and to chriſtianity, implies not only to inſtruct, or cauſe them to be inſtructed, in the contents of this ſacred doctrine, proportionably to their age and capacity, but likewiſe to make this doctrine and Jeſus Chriſt who revealed it to us, reſpectable and amiable to them; to form their minds upon the model of his, and to endeavour to lead them to the obſervance of his precepts and the imitation of his example. This is what all parents and preceptors ſhould propoſe to themſelves as their ultimate aim, not only in the hours immediately ſet apart for inſtruction, but alſo in the whole of their intercourſe with ſuch as are under their care, and in their whole behaviour towards them, if they would properly comply with the apoſtolical injunction in the text. For promoting in ſome degree the attainment of this deſign, I ſhall collect together, under the five following heads, what is proper herein to be obſerved.

The firſt is this: Inſpire your children or your ſcholars, from their earlieſt infancy, with a juſt prepoſſeſſion in favour of the truth and importance of religion and chriſtianity. I mean not to ſay, that they are to fear God and to be chriſtians, from mere prepoſſeſſion. No, they muſt examine the merits of religion

religion and chriſtianity for themſelves, when they are arrived at the full uſe of their underſtanding, and be ſure of their faith upon fixt principles. But ſince they live and are brought up among chriſtians, much depends on the firſt impreſſions they receive of the nature of the chriſtian doctrine; and theſe impreſſions contribute greatly to render the inveſtigations they ſhall hereafter enter upon eaſy or difficult to them. And who can blame parents or teachers, who have actually gone through theſe inveſtigations themſelves, and have in conſequence become chriſtians from thorough conviction, who have known and experienced the holineſs, the comfort, the divinity of their religion; who can blame them, if they teach their children or their ſcholars alſo to ſtudy it on that ſide; nay, who would not charge them with inconſiſtency of conduct, if they neglected ſo to do? If I know that any thing tends to my improvement, to my comfort and happineſs, it is impoſſible for me to repreſent it as an indifferent thing to the perſons whoſe welfare I have at heart: I muſt neceſſarily give them advantageous ideas of it, if they are not yet in a condition to judge of it from their own ſagacity and experience. Obſerve the ſame conduct then in regard to religion and chriſtianity, you who are employed in the buſineſs of chriſtian education. Your children, your ſcholars, have a great opinion of your underſtanding, of your ſagacity, of your wiſdom and prudence in the choice between good and evil. What they ſee you conſtantly eſteem and love,

love, will readily gain their eſteem and affection. What they ſee you reſolutely reject and abhor, will ſoon attract their contempt and abhorrence. What you treat with neglect as an indifferent thing, they will not be apt to purſue with ſolicitude and zeal. Oh would but all parents and preceptors conſider this, with how much more ſucceſs would their labours be crowned! But what impreſſions, what ideas of chriſtianity muſt your children, your ſcholars imbibe, if they cannot diſcover, either from your words or your works, that you conſider it as an important, as the moſt important concern; if they ſeldom or never hear you ſpeak of God, of Chriſt, of religion; if they hear you ſpeak of them without ſerioufneſs, without complacency, or even with contempt; if they hear you make them your ſport, or honour others with your approbation while they deride them; if they ſee how apt you are yourſelf, under every pretence of urgent affairs, to neglect both public and domeſtic worſhip, and how glad you are when you have caſt off theſe duties as a burden; what can they, I ſay, conclude from ſuch a conduct, but that religion is either an indifferent or a grievous and irkſome buſineſs? And how little in general will all the remonſtrances you afterwards adduce to reform their ſentiments be able to effect, againſt the influence of your example? Would you then communicate to your children or your pupils a prepoſſeſſion in behalf of the importance and truth of the chriſtian religion; let them ſee that you your-

ſelf

ſelf are aſſured of it. Be not aſhamed to diſcourſe with them, or in their preſence with others, concerning God and divine concerns. But this is never to be done without gravity, without reverence, without tokens of inward ſatisfaction. Teſtify your diſpleaſure, your abhorrence at every thing that militates with theſe ſentiments. Haſte with joy to the place where the worſhippers of God aſſemble in his ſervice. Let it appear how much you are diſtreſſed when any thing happens to prevent you from it. See that it be no ſmall matter that hinders you from the celebration of private worſhip; perform it in company with your children, as ſoon as they are capable of any attention; and do it ſo as that they may ſee that you reckon this kind of employment and recreation far more momentous and noble than any other. This will not fail to make ſalutary impreſſions on your children or your ſcholars; and it will be impoſſible for them afterwards to treat with levity, or to reject without the ſtricteſt examination, a matter which they have always ſeen you revere as ſomething ſo important and ſo holy.

A ſecond rule, in cloſe connection with the former, is this: Teach them from their tendereſt years of youth to conceive of religion as the beſt and ſureſt means for becoming virtuous and happy; and do this not ſo much by argument as by your own example. Shew them on one hand by your wiſe, moderate, upright, beneficent, chriſtian behaviour, how much religion is calculated to form its votaries

votaries into good, pious, uſeful men, citizens, heads of families, friends. To this end tell them occaſionally how hard it would be for you to do or to omit this or that; to refuſe ſuch an advantage, to take upon you ſuch an incumbrance, to withſtand this temptation to evil, or to conquer that difficulty in doing good; did not religion by its doctrines and promiſes, give you inclination and ability to it; unleſs you had before you the precepts and the example of your ſaviour, who has deſerved ſo much of you and of the whole human race; unleſs you conſidered yourſelf as a being deſigned for another and a better life; and how eaſy theſe views and expectations render it to you now, even to follow the dictates of your conſcience and to fulfil your duty, when neither can be done without denying yourſelf many temporal advantages. Shew them however likewiſe on the other hand, by a ſteady and cheerful behaviour, by the conſtant ſerenity of your mind, by the ſtability of your truſt in God, by your patience in afflictions, by your contentedneſs under diſappointments, how conſolatory religion is, and how happy it renders mankind. Take your opportunity for this principally in caſes when you are moſt in need of its comfort and aſſiſtance, and moſt happily experience them. Converſe with your children, with your pupils, on theſe occurrences, and ſhew them what a bleſſed influence religion has on your repoſe. This is certainly an excellent means of making religion venerable and amiable to them.

Were

Were you, for example, when you have been calumniated, when you have been ſeverely and unjuſtly blamed, when your beſt actions have been imputed to bad deſigns, and inſtead of the well-earnt praiſe you expected, you are puniſhed with ſcorn; were you to ſhew yourſelf calm and unruffled in the midſt of your family, from the approving teſtimony of your conſcience, and under the perſuaſion that God knows your intentions and accepts your conduct; your children would learn to look more at the judgment of their reaſon than at the judgment of the world, and to prefer a good conſcience and the approbation of God, to all the applauſes and panegyrics of mortals. Are your honeſt plans defeated, is your induſtry unrequited, your prudence fruſtrated, your hopes annihilated; let the contentedneſs and cheerfulneſs which you ſtill retain be a leſſon to your children of the force of religion upon your mind. Say to them: I have done my duty, I have done it with all poſſible exactitude, I have been wanting in nothing that depended on me for reaching my good deſign; but I had no certainty that I ſhould attain it. I know that all depends on God, and is directed by him. Now I ſee that my views were not his views; but I am aſſured that his views are always good, always the beſt. At preſent indeed, I cannot perceive it; probably hereafter by experience I may. I was an inſtrument in his hand; I have acted according to his will as far as I knew it. Upon the whole, it muſt however be attended

by good effects, though they be not exactly ſuch as I expected from it. Probably I have been ſowing ſeed that will only begin to ſhoot upward after ſome years are elapſed, and bear fruit when I am no longer here. Were you on theſe and the like occaſions thus to exhibit yourſelves to your children, your ſcholars, and by ſuch diſcourſes and examples, render ſenſible to them as it were the efficacy of the doctrine you confeſs; a religion productive of ſuch effects, which keeps its confeſſors ſo ſatisfied and cheerful in ſuch circumſtances, muſt neceſſarily gain their affection and eſteem, and they will at all times ſeek refreſhment and comfort there, where they know that you have ſo often and ſo copiouſly found it.

Their hearts once thus prepared to hearken to the voice of truth and virtue, the particular inſtruction you ſhall give them from the doctrines of religion will far more happily ſucceed; only it muſt be conducted in a manner adapted to the nature of the ſubject and the capacity of the ſcholar. I will compriſe the moſt material points that are to be attended to, in the third rule or obſervation. It is this: In inſtructing your children concerning religion, be ſure not to begin with the moſt difficult and ſublime myſteries of it. This is not only to labour in vain, but may even do much miſchief. It is in vain to attempt it, becauſe theſe doctrines, even in reference to what may be comprehended and explained, are far too lofty for the apprehenſion of a child, or the firſt

firſt years of youth. Is it not an idle employment to communicate words to children, to which they can no more annex ideas than if they were borrowed from a foreign language? It is however not only idle, but likewiſe hurtful to do ſo. The children thus accuſtom themſelves to be ſatisfied with words inſtead of things, and to miſtake a readineſs in pronouncing particular terms and phraſes in a certain connection, for actual knowledge and ſcience; and this in a hundred other inſtances, muſt effectually forecloſe to them the way that leads to truth. This is not all. That inadequate procedure muſt neceſſarily relax the eagerneſs of their deſire for acquiring a knowledge of religion; becauſe nothing but the pleaſure of ſatisfying the curioſity can uphold this eagerneſs of deſire. This pleaſure however, and this gratification of the curioſity, muſt abſolutely fall to the ground, and give place to diſguſt and averſion, by forcing us to admit and retain what we abſolutely cannot underſtand. Nay how eaſily may this wrong method of teaching beget doubt and unbelief with increaſing years! How eaſily may religion become ſuſpected by the youth who is beginning to reflect upon it, on beholding it in ſo gloomy a garb, on finding in his memory more incomprehenſible words and expreſſions than clear or perſpicuous ideas! Would you avert theſe perils from him; make the doctrine concerning the myſteries of religion the laſt part of your inſtruction. In the mean time the ſcholar will learn to reflect

upon himſelf, will ſtudy himſelf, and preſently diſcover unfathomable depths in the nature and connexion of his ſoul and his life. He will in the mean time acquire ſome knowledge of the energies and operations of nature, and preſently experience how impenetrable the darkneſs is in which it is involved. In ſhort, he will find myſtery enough in objects the reality whereof he cannot deny. And then it will make no repugnant impreſſion upon him, when he perceives that religion, and particularly divine revelation contains doctrines that have their dark ſide, and whereof we can acquire but a very imperfect knowledge.

Begin therefore your inſtruction with what is moſt eaſy and ſuited to the apprehenſion of a child or a youth. Make them firſt attentive to their manifold wants and to the means of ſupplying them which nature and ſocial life have put into our hands. Help them to remark and to diſtinguiſh their feelings, their appetites and affections; teach them to compare them with external objects, and with the feelings, the appetites and affections of other people; bring them to the knowledge of their dependent and feeble condition, and the connections in which they ſtand with external objects, and thence deduce the principal duties of morality which relate to themſelves and to their neighbour. Make it comprehenſible to them by example; and let their own heart pronounce upon what is right and wrong, proper and improper. Shew them farther the moſt affecting beauties of nature. Teach them to underſtand

ſtand the properties and ends of the principal creatures; endeavour to give them ſome conceptions of order, of art, of wiſdom; diſplay as it were before their eyes, the riches diſcovered by mankind here on earth for their nouriſhment, their accommodation, their pleaſure; rejoice in it with them; and then tell them, without any formal and learned demonſtration, that there is an inviſible being, a deity, who produced and preſerves all theſe beauties and benefits. They will immediately be ſenſible to this truth. It is grounded in the wants of our underſtanding and our heart, and both of them will always revolt againſt any objection that may be brought againſt it, if they be not entirely ſpoiled. Repreſent this deity to them, not as an auſtere maſter and inexorable judge; but as a father, who loves and provides for all his creatures, who is continually ſhewing them more kindneſs than the tendereſt parents ſhew their children; who however entertains not a blind affection for them, but requires of them a cheerful obedience for their own advantage, and whoſe favour is no otherwiſe to be obtained than by doing what is right and proper. Inform them at the ſame time, by recurring to their own feelings, wherein they are beholden to this deity. Say to them, for inſtance, at times: I perceive that thou loveſt me, my dear child; for thou knoweſt the greatneſs of my love to thee, and how earneſtly I intereſt myſelf in thy welfare. Shouldſt thou not then much rather love our common Father in

heaven, whoſe kind providence ſuſtains both thee and me? From him alone have I the means and the deſire to do thee good. Thou thinkeſt it thy duty to acknowledge my benefits with gratitude. Out of gratitude thou endeavoureſt to render thyſelf agreeable to me. Thou neglecteſt many things becauſe thou knoweſt they would diſpleaſe me. Thou doſt many others, becauſe thou art aſſured that I have a pleaſure in them. Shouldſt thou not then in like manner behave thyſelf towards him from whom all things proceed, and without whom thou and I ſhould not be at all? In this manner you will convince your children or your ſcholars, very eaſily of the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of our principal duties towards God, and may enable them early in life to fulfil them. Then give them to underſtand, that heretofore mankind moſt ſhamefully abuſed all the bounties of this God, that they entirely loſt ſight both of him and their duties; but that this God, inſtead of puniſhing and exterminating them from the earth, ſent Jeſus Chriſt to them as his ambaſſador, to inſtruct them in what they did not know, and to furniſh them again with means of eſcaping the puniſhment they deſerved, and of becoming wiſe, good and happy. Repreſent to them the virtues of the redeemer in their brighteſt colours; deeply imprint the image of his moral excellence upon their ſouls; tell them how holy and beneficent a life he led, how much mankind are indebted to him, how perfect and happy he will

render them even after their death, if they obey his laws and follow his example; what an exceeding complacency God had in what Chriſt did for us, and what complacency he will alſo have in us, if we do our utmoſt, in our ſtation and calling, to ſhew the ſame perſevering integrity and faithfulneſs which our ſaviour teſtified in the proſecution of the work that was given him to do. Lead them by this method to the doctrine of immortality and of the future life, which you will naturally repreſent to them as affording to mankind the only ſolid conſolation in diſtreſs, as the ſureſt foundation of their hopes. Give them to ſee their conduct in this world as the groundwork of their portion in the other, and accuſtom them ſo to regard, to eſteem and to uſe the preſent, as its connexion with the future demands. Your inſtruction being conducted in this or ſome ſimilar manner, will contain nothing that is not on a level with the capacity of a child or a youth, which will not agreeably employ his underſtanding and affect his heart; nothing that does not coincide with his own feelings, and which he may not apply in various inſtances to his daily behaviour; and thus will religion be important, venerable and amiable to him. And if this be the caſe, it will ſtrike deep root in his heart, and reſiſt every attack of misfortune and cavil; it will bring forth the faireſt fruit in his heart and life, and render him truly wiſe and happy.

Yet more ſucceſsfully to promote this deſign, pious hearers, endeavour, fourthly, to awaken and continually keep up in your children a lively ſenſe of their entire dependence upon God, upon his will, upon his providence. This is the principal ground of all real godlineſs, the beſt preſervative againſt iniquity, the ſtrongeſt incitement to goodneſs, the richeſt ſource of peace. Happy they, who have been accuſtomed, from their earlieſt youth, to conſider all things in their dependence on the ſupreme being, to have regard to God in all things, and to give ſuch a direction to their heart as that on all occaſions it naturally, without compulſion or violence, nay with pleaſure and delight, lifts itſelf to him in whom we live and are. How many temptations to ſin will ſuch an one without trouble overcome, which would have overcome him in a contrary diſpoſition of mind! How many peaceful and pleaſant hours will he enjoy in ſuch circumſtances, wherein others, who live remote from God, are excruciated by anxious cares and ſorrows! Oh ſtrive to procure your children, your pupils, theſe advantages, this happineſs, you who have the management of their education! Direct their view, in all the events that befall themſelves and others, to God, from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things. Teach them to recogniſe and to revere his ſupreme controul, his wiſdom and goodneſs, as well in ſmall things as in great. Guard them from that

that error which is ſo detrimental to our virtue and piety no leſs than to our comfort and ſatisfaction, and which, though it do not indeed entirely diſſolve our ties with the firſt and beſt of beings, yet relaxes them to an extreme degree; namely, that God only regards the whole and not the various parts of which it is compoſed; that he does not take cogniſance of every one of his creatures in particular, and provide for it; that he governs merely by univerſal laws, and never has any peculiar influence on our actions or the events of our lives. Tell them, whenever any thing agreeable happens to them, and they are rejoicing in it: It is God, our common parent, who cauſes theſe advantages to reach thy dwelling, who by giving thee this cauſe of joy, affords thee a freſh teſtimony of his parental care and affection. Oh adore this gracious being, thank him for his unmerited goodneſs; and beware of forgetting ſo great a benefactor, or of refuſing him the obedience ſo juſtly his due. And likewiſe ſay, when any thing adverſe befalls them; when fear or ſorrow invades their heart: Even this affliction, this diſappointment, this danger, is dependent on the will of him who rules and governs all things both in heaven and on earth, who alſo knows and loves thee. Submit thyſelf to his will; it is at all times right and proper. He knows how beſt to guide thee to wiſdom, to virtue, to happineſs. Honour him with ſtedfaſt confidence; reſign to him thy conduct; the end of it will certainly be ſalvation and bleſſing, glory and joy.

Thus, my friends, will you bring up your children or your ſcholars to real devotion of heart. Thus will you beſt preſerve them from indifference and levity in regard to religion. Thus will you habituate them, in the language of the ſcripture, to walk in the preſence of God, to have the Lord alway before them; and then will they, as the pſalmiſt ſays, never be moved; i. e. they will allow nothing to turn them aſide from the road of duty and virtue, and even in the midſt of tribulations and dangers will be calm and undiſmayed.

I have here a ſhort remark to make, particularly relative to prayer, which undoubtedly is an excellent means for cheriſhing in us the ſentiment of our dependence upon God. Very little children are not capable of this exerciſe of piety and devotion; and if we accuſtom them to it, before they can have the ſlighteſt conception of a ſuperior being, we accuſtom them to pray without the underſtanding, and to conſider the whole tranſaction as a matter of mere ceremony. Beware however even when their intelligence and their reflection begin to appear, when they make the firſt ſteps towards the idea of a univerſal father of mankind, an inviſible and powerful benefactor, when they already know ſomething of Jeſus Chriſt, as the greateſt friend of man; even then, I ſay, take care not to teach them either long or difficult prayers; not to keep them at this exerciſe by compulſion, nor to puniſh the neglect of it by ſevere correction. Only go before them at times

times by your own example; take advantage of the moments when they are in the moſt ſerene and cheerful mood, when they are diſpoſed to ſerioufneſs and reflection, or when they are ſtrongly affected by particular incidents; repreſent prayer to them as the glory and the happineſs of mankind; accuſtom them early, but without conſtraint, to expreſs their thoughts and feelings briefly and ſimply in their own words; teach them to attend to the good which they daily enjoy, to their wants and defects, to the faults they commit, and to make theſe obſervations the ſubject of their prayer: thus will they gradually become rational petitioners, and have a reliſh for this ſacred practice. And never imagine that it is beyond the reach of children to pray without forms preſcribed and got by rote. Nothing more is neceſſary, than that you give them at times ſuch ſuggeſtions as are adapted to their age and comprehenſion. Aſk them, for inſtance, in the morning, when they are about to pray, whether they are not glad that they are ſtill alive and in health; whether they do not wiſh likewiſe to be preſerved all the day long from every accident; whether they have not a deſire to learn and to do ſome good to-day, and to behave themſelves as obedient children and ſcholars towards their parents and preceptors, &c. and then teach them to turn their thoughts and feelings into a ſhort prayer in ſome ſuch manner as this: I rejoice, my dear heavenly father, that I am ſtill alive and in health. I thank thee

thee for my life and for my health. Continue thy watchful providence over me this day, to guard me from everything that may be hurtful to me. Grant that I may neither ſpeak nor do any ill, that I may readily obey my parents and inſtructors, faithfully diſcharge my duty, and ſo become more intelligent and good from day to day, that thou mayſt have a gracious complacency in me, &c. — Avoid the too common practice of making them repeat the Lord's prayer daily, and probably more than once: it is in general too difficult for them to comprehend; and by this daily repetition, they will infallibly often, very often, repeat it without attention and without devotion.

Finally, my friends, endeavour to inſtruct your children or your ſcholars betimes in the true end and deſign of religion and of chriſtianity. Imprint it deeply on them, that the chriſtian doctrine is a practical doctrine, a doctrine of truth unto godlineſs; that it is not inſtituted merely to gratify our curioſity, and to ſtore our minds with various kinds of knowledge which we could not otherwiſe have acquired, or not without great labour and pains; but by means of this knowledge to improve and to tranquillize our heart, and to regulate our conduct accordingly. Tell and ſhew them that it relates more to doing than to knowing, more to living than to believing, and that the beſt chriſtian is not he who knows the moſt, who can deliver the doctrines of chriſtianity in the moſt perſpicuous and juſt method,

but

but he whoſe mind and conduct is in the completeſt harmony with the mind and conduct of Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of our religion; who has made the greateſt progreſs in humility, in gentleneſs, in the love of God and of mankind, in beneficence, in patience, in ſelf-denial and contempt of the world; and that ſuch a chriſtian mind, ſuch a holy life, are the beſt means of rendering chriſtianity reſpectable to its ſcorners and foes. Guard them betimes againſt that deplorable rage for damning and curſing which is continually gaining ground in the chriſtian world, by teaching them that all they who confeſs Chriſt for their lord, adopt his doctrine and obediently keep his commandments, are of the number of his followers, however they may differ from one another otherwiſe in rites and opinions. Remind them continually of the expreſs declarations of Chriſt and his apoſtles: "Obedience is better than ſacrifice; he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me; ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you; circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God; in Chriſt Jeſus only that faith availeth which worketh by love; faith without works is dead." To this end always repreſent religion to them on the practical ſide; and account nothing as a part of it which can neither contribute to our improvement nor our quiet. Shew them what influence every doctrine, every precept of religion ſhould naturally have on our ſentiments

ſentiments and behaviour; what comfort its promiſes ſhould give us in all the events of life; and remind them of theſe things on all occaſions. Aſſiſt them in making the application of them to the particular circumſtances in which they are at the time. Would you, for example, ſubdue the pride of their hearts; aſk them, whether this is reconcilable with the temper of Chriſt, and hold up to them the pattern of his condeſcenſion and meekneſs. Do they find it difficult to ſuppreſs their reſentments; inculcate upon them how much the degrading paſſion of revenge is in oppoſition to the chriſtian character and calling, and how directly oppoſite it is to every thing that chriſtianity teaches and enjoins. Are they addicted to impetuous tranſports of anger and wrath; refer them to the mild and patient Jeſus, and teach them to their confuſion and amendment to compare the injuries that he bore with thoſe which they have received. Accuſtom them in general to keep the example of Chriſt continually before their eyes, and to interrogate themſelves frequently: What would my ſaviour have determined on, what would he have done, how would he have behaved, had he been in my ſituation? How would he have regarded this or that matter; what ſort of judgment would he have paſſed upon it? What impreſſion would the flatteries with which I am loaded, or the ſcorn with which I am treated, have made upon him? This, my friends, this alone is real chriſtianity; and if you train up your children or your

ſcholars,

ſcholars, to ſuch a frame of mind, to ſuch a conduct, you "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," you make them chriſtians indeed, you qualify them for becoming capable of an eminent degree of perfection and happineſs both in the preſent and in the future world.

What a joyful proſpect for parents who love their children, for preceptors and teachers, who are convinced of the dignity of their office, and the ſacredneſs of their duties! What labour will not be eaſy and pleaſant to them, while they are indulging the hope of reaching this aim! What an honour to form upright and faithful diſciples for Chriſt our beloved redeemer, and thus to enlarge the borders of his kingdom! What a conſiderable benefit both to the preſent and the future generations of mankind! And what a raviſhing delight, what an inexpreſſible recompence will it hereafter be to thoſe parents, to thoſe preceptors and teachers, when they rejoin their children or thoſe who were intruſted to their care, in the celeſtial abodes, when they ſhall there receive their thanks for the fidelity wherewith they diſcharged their truſt, and hear from one or more of the bleſſed: All hail to thee, for thou haſt delivered my ſoul; thou haſt kept mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling! O God, what happineſs can be equal to that of the deliverer of a human ſoul!

SERMON V.

General Obſervations and Rules concerning Education.

GOD, though thou haſt in thy wiſdom aſſigned us this earth as our abode only for a ſhort time, and ſet narrow limits to our terreſtrial life; yet how important is our deſtination in it! How much in this ſhort, precarious time have we to do, and how much depends, in regard to all our future fortunes, on the method in which we do it! We live in a ſtate of diſcipline and probation, and according to our behaviour in it will the ſtate of retribution, that awaits us, be regulated. Thou wouldſt that in this ſtate of preparation we ſhould make the beſt, the moſt generally beneficial uſe of our capacities and talents, of our faculties and poſſeſſions, and thus not only promote our own perfection and happineſs, but alſo the perfection and happineſs of our fellow-creatures, according to our ſeveral abilities. Thou haſt connected us together by various ties, in the intention that we ſhould care for each other and mutually labour at our temporal and eternal welfare. This duty thou haſt particularly impoſed on parents, guardians and tutors, in regard to their children or their pupils. Thou haſt

intruſted

intruſted to them the formation and nurture of rational, immortal ſouls, which are precious in thy ſight, and wilt call them to account for it hereafter. Oh then grant them thoroughly to perceive the importance of this duty; cauſe them often to ruminate on the conſequences of their conduct in this particular and of thy judgment; and let this ſentiment inflame them with an ardent zeal, to do as carefully, as conſcientiouſly and faithfully as poſſible what thou haſt enjoined them to do. Aſſiſt them alſo happily to overcome all the difficulties which they meet with in it; refreſh them with the encouraging proſpect of the good ſucceſs of their exertions, and enable both themſelves and thoſe committed to their charge to be continually making farther progreſs, on the way of wiſdom, of chriſtian virtue and of real happineſs. Bleſs to the promotion of theſe deſigns the ſalutary leſſons now to be delivered, and grant, that we may not ſimply conceive and confeſs them to be ſalutary, but may actually regulate our deportment by them. We pray thee for all this in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, our ſaviour, who has taught us in this manner to addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

EPHES. vi. 4.

Ye fathers, — bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

SOME time ago we delivered to you, in ſeveral diſcourſes, inſtructions relating to rational and chriſtian education. We pointed out to you, pious hearers,

hearers, how the underſtanding of children is to be cultivated; how their heart is to be allured to the love of goodneſs; how they are particularly to be trained to the primary virtues; and how they are moſt ſucceſsfully to be brought up to religion and to chriſtianity. Theſe particulars we endeavoured to lay before you, in their natural connexion, as completely as we could without running into a prolixity that would have been unfavourable to attention. This field however is ſo fertile in profitable conſiderations, that we have reſolved to give it ſtill a little gleaning ere we finally take leave of it; and to this purpoſe we have in the fear of the Lord devoted the preſent moments.

We ſhall therefore deliver to you a few general rules and obſervations on education, which may at once tend to facilitate to you the obſervance of the precepts already propounded, and encourage you in the ſteady and faithful diſcharge of this truſt. It will at the ſame time afford us an opportunity of extending and farther illuſtrating ſeveral of the reflections and propoſitions which in the foregoing treatiſes could only be curſorily noticed; and I hope you will readily grant me your attention once more to a ſubject in all reſpects of ſo great importance. There are five or ſix principal rules and obſervations which I intend this morning to preſs upon you.

The firſt is this. Frequently conſider what ſpecies of creatures they are in the education and formation whereof you are employed. You are not to conſider them either as merely animal or as merely rational

rational creatures. On the ſcale of being man ſtands between the brute and the angel. He is neither to be degraded to the former, nor elevated to the latter. But in him ſenſuality and reaſon are to be brought into agreement, and to act with one accord at the attainment of the ſame object. If then you ſet no bounds to the ſenſual appetites of your children; if you allow them peremptorily to judge of the value of outward things by the impreſſions they make on their ſenſes; if you train them to obedience and duty entirely by ſenſual pleaſure or diſpleaſure; if you govern them only in an arbitrary, a deſpotic manner; you then forget the dignity of their nature, and in all probability they will never riſe in their ſentiments and affections far above the irrational creation. If on the other hand you require of them in their juvenile years the gravity and ſedateneſs of an aged philoſopher; if you impute to them every defect of conſideration and reflection as a crime; if you expect them conſtantly to act upon the moſt accurate principles; if you forbid them every innocent puerile diverſion, and endeavour to render them at once inſenſible to everything that acts upon their ſenſes in an agreeable or a diſagreeable manner; if you continually exerciſe them in the ſevereſt ſelf-denial: you forget the infirmity of their preſent ſtate, you forget that they are human creatures, whoſe glory conſiſts not in inſenſibility or the extirpation of their ſenſual appetites; but in the gradually acquired maſtery

over them. Avoid both theſe extremes with equal care, pious hearers, if you would qualify your children for reaching the deſign of their being. Teach them neither fondly to pamper and effeminate their body, nor unneceſſarily to mortify and torment it. Teach them to reſpect and provide for it as an eſſential part of man, but never to treat it as the moſt important part. Let them enjoy in playful mirth the beauties of nature, the recreations of ſocial life, the pleaſure of moderate exerciſe and liberty, and all the harmleſs joys of their unthinking age; let them likewiſe, for their future caution, feel the pain brought on by accident or their own imprudence; ſtrive not vainly to eradicate their natural appetites for pleaſure, for applauſe, for honour, for quiet and independence; but ſtrive to temper them wiſely, and by degrees to direct them to the worthieſt kinds of pleaſure, of applauſe, of honour, of quiet and independence. Teach them by their own experience and that of others, to diſtinguiſh appearance from reality, and to connect the preſent with the future. Cultivate their underſtanding in proportion as their ſenſes grow more active, and become more ſuſceptible of lively impreſſions; let diſſipation and reflection, recreation and labour, gaiety and ſeriouſneſs, take place of each other in due rotation; and frequently give occaſion to ſuch actions of virtue and beneficence as may draw forth the whole ſenſibility of their heart in generous emotions. Thus will you treat them as creatures partly ſenſual and partly

partly rational; and thus will you ever be bringing them nearer to the true deſtination of man, whoſe reaſon is not given him for extirpating his ſenſual appetites and inſtincts, but to regulate and govern them.

Another leading rule in education is this: Endeavour by the propereſt means to keep up a becoming deference and reſpect for yourſelf in your children. Upon this uncommonly much depends, particularly in the firſt years of education; indeed I may ſay, everything depends upon it. If your children are to be rendered wiſe and virtuous, they muſt in their early years take many important maxims on your bare word, and on that authority alone believe them to be true; becauſe, though they may in ſome meaſure comprehend them, yet the reaſon of them and their connection with other propoſitions, they cannot yet perceive. They muſt learn to obſerve many duties, and to habituate themſelves to many virtues, the influence whereof upon their preſent and future well-being, and the well-being of ſociety, cannot as yet be made ſufficiently plain and luminous to them. They muſt have ſomebody on whoſe deciſion they can ſafely rely, to regulate their own judgment on the various and ſo often contradictory judgments which they hear paſſed by others on the good or ill qualities of things, or on the value of certain actions, and which they know not how to reconcile. They muſt in ſhort learn to obey, and frequently from obedience alone reſiſt their inclina-

tions and abſtain from pleaſure. But can this be brought about, ſo as to be really beneficial to their underſtanding and their heart, unleſs you are greatly reſpected by them, and are able conſtantly to maintain this reſpect? Few parents and preceptors however entertain any doubt concerning the neceſſity of this particular, all having ſelf-love enough to be deſirous of reſpect and authority, and no one being willing to part with the command which he has, or thinks he has over another. But the way in which this reſpect is acquired and maintained is not always the beſt; it is often faulty in a high degree; and a building that is raiſed on a bad foundation may eaſily be ſhaken, it may be demoliſhed by any trifling accident. If you found your reſpect merely on authority and force; if you endeavour conſtantly, or at leaſt uſually, to ſupport it by a ſcowling brow, by harſh expreſſions, by arbitrary commands, by ſevere chaſtiſements, by an imperious, ſullen, arrogant behaviour; if you abſolutely require on all occaſions implicit obedience; if you puniſh every the ſlighteſt infringement of it with inflexible ſeverity, however various the cauſe and effects of it may be: you will indeed ſpread fear and terror around you; your children, your ſcholars, will feel the weight of your authority, and will ſtand in awe of the diſagreeable conſequences of your diſpleaſure; but you will make ſlaves of them, impatiently ſubmitting to the yoke you lay upon their necks, and ready to caſt it off whenever they think they may do it with impunity.

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If you would build this deference, this reſpect on a firm and laſting foundation; ſee that your children, your ſcholars, acquire a good opinion of you, that they have high notions of your underſtanding and of your integrity, that they even reckon you wiſe and virtuous and by wiſdom and virtue happy, and that they have not the leaſt doubt of your aiming at their good. For infuſing into them theſe good opinions of you, it is not neceſſary that you praiſe yourſelf, or commend to them the eminent qualities of your mind and heart and the propriety of your behaviour, in words; but it would be well if another ſhould do ſo at times with diſcretion and in a natural and eaſy manner in their preſence. Let them only not ſee anything fooliſh, unbecoming, inconſiſtent, much leſs bad and vicious, in your diſcourſes and actions, do but follow the dictates of wiſdom and virtue yourſelf at all times and in all reſpects, and as much as poſſible with a cheerful countenance, on which no trace of conflict with yourſelf, or any inward repugnance to the ſuggeſtions of conſcience and duty appear. Conſider your children as attentive witneſſes and ſevere judges of your conduct; and rather fly from them with all ſpeed, when you have reaſon to fear, leſt any diſorderly paſſion ſhould get the better of you, or you ſhould be put out of temper in any way ſhocking and offenſive to them. Never pronounce on any ſubject without ſufficient knowledge of its merits, that you may not be

reduced to the neceſſity of reverſing your judgment. Never act without good reaſons, that you may not be aſhamed of your actions, and may ſafely repeat them on ſimilar occaſions. Carefully conceal your own faults and infirmities from them, till their reaſon be ſtrong enough to venerate the voice of truth and the injunctions of virtue for themſelves, and without reference to him who inculcates upon them the doctrines of truth, and ſets before them the obligations of virtue. Let them in ſhort perceive how much you have their welfare at heart, how tenderly you love them. Rejoice with them in all the good that happens to them, and think it no diſgrace to take part with them at times in their innocent amuſements. Such a wife, virtuous, amiable and prudent a demeanour as this will infallibly give them the beſt opinion of you; and this opinion, ſupported by filial gratitude and affection, will ſhield them on moſt occaſions from every ſeduction to error and vice. The reverence they have for you will be ſolid and permanent; it will add force and energy to all your remonſtrances, your aſſertions, your precepts and commands; it will prevent all pernicious doubt of the juſtice, the truth, the legitimacy and the reaſonableneſs of them; it will render the docility and obedience of your children or your pupils, no leſs cheerful than ſincere, and even abundantly alleviate to yourſelf the diſcharge of your duty.

A third

A third principal rule in bringing up children is this: In the education of your children, follow ſome particular plan, or certain fixt principles and rules, adopted on mature deliberation, and inflexibly adhere to them as far as is poſſible. Since in the firſt periods of education, as I have already more than once obſerved, far more depends on conſtant exerciſe in duty and on the acquiſition of good habits, than on formal inſtruction; ſo a ſtrict uniformity muſt neceſſarily be obſerved, if you would have that exerciſe to grow into aptitude, and theſe good habits become natural and efficacious. The neglect of this rule is one of the principal cauſes of the poor effects of much otherwiſe laudable pains, employed to this purpoſe. If the chief perſons engaged in the tuition of a child diſagree in their ſentiments, opinions, purpoſes and principles, and this diſagreement be manifeſted in the preſence of the child, or end in altercation and contention; or if even the ſame perſon, for want of ſettled principles, proceeds ſometimes one way and ſometimes another, blames and puniſhes to-day that which he yeſterday praiſed and rewarded, orders to-day what he yeſterday forbad, uſes to-day an immoderate ſeverity and to-morrow an exceſſive relaxation and indulgence; the purpoſes of education can never be attained. The judgment of the child will be always dubious and wavering; his inclinations and views always remain unſettled and contradictory; and the good confidence he naturally has in his parents and tutors

muſt ever be growing weaker, and at length totally fail. And how can I give his faculties a certain direction, to eaſe him in the application of them, if he be forced to apply them ſo often to oppoſite and conflicting matters? How can I make his duty agreeable and virtue amiable to him, if he has one moment reproof, at another praiſe, now reward, now correction to expect from it? Beware of theſe too common faults, you that are entruſted with the buſineſs of education. Conſult frequently with each other upon it, ye fathers and mothers; conſult likewiſe upon it with all the perſons who may have any ſhare in the education of your children, or a remarkable influence on their manners. Impart to each other your obſervations and experiences; agree upon certain fixt principles and rules of conduct, to be obſerved among you, and follow them with invariable preciſion. Be not inconſiſtent; contradict not each other; much rather concur in mutual ſupport; build upon the ſame foundation; work by the ſame plan; conſtantly go hand in hand; and be aſſured, that ſuch uniform and harmonious endeavours, though they ſhould even be erroneous in ſome reſpects, will bring to effect far more than others, which though better in themſelves, are yet ſubject to many alterations and many contradictions.

Fourthly, be firm and unwearied in the proſecution of your well-concerted plan, and let neither difficulties nor ill ſucceſs divert you from it. Flatter not

not yourſelf with the hopes of completely attaining your beneficent aim in the compaſs of a few months or years. Expect not that every good ſeed you caſt into the earth ſhall immediately ſprout upwards, and bear fruit at your appointed time. It may frequently lie long buried in the earth, it may ſeem totally dead, and yet at length continued culture, or ſome unexpected favourable circumſtance, ſhall reſtore it to life, and reward your patience with the hopes of a bleſſed harveſt. Many leſſons of wiſdom muſt be repeated a hundred times, before the teacher ſhall be able to deliver them in a way ſuited to the apprehenſion of his ſcholar. Many a bad habit, many a perverſe trick, muſt be attacked a hundred times in vain, ere it abates of its force, and gives way to practice and habits of a contrary caſt. Many a virtue muſt be as oft recommended without effect, till at length it appears in its full light, and preſents itſelf to the child or the youth, in the form that moves his heart ſo as to gain his eſteem and love. Intelligence and ſenſibility are frequently very late in their appearance, and then ſhew themſelves at once in ſo much vigour, as more than compenſates for all the previous attempts that were ineffectually made to call them forth. Wiſdom and virtue and the fear of God, are advantages not to be produced at once and without pains: they are potentates that muſt long diſpute the field with folly and vice before they can get the command of

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our hearts. Seize every opportunity to aſſiſt them in this conqueſt; never be weary of combating the enemy till he is tired out with your oppoſition, always remembering, that the years of childhood and early youth are only adapted to ſowing and not to reaping. Let the unſucceſsful effects of your exertions make you continually more attentive to yourſelf, to your pupils, and to every the leaſt external circumſtance; but let them not render you diſpirited. Look for the cauſe of it rather in your own wrong method of proceeding, than in the impoſſibility of meeting with ſucceſs; and let not your vanity prevent you from correcting theſe errors as ſoon as you diſcover them; ſo, however, as that this alteration in your method be not very conſpicuous, leſt it ſhould weaken the confidence your pupils have in you. Call yourſelf frequently to account for the diligence and fidelity you exert in this employment; converſe upon it with your friends, and avail yourſelf of their ſagacity and experience; and if ſtill, with the good teſtimony of your conſcience, you fail of your aims, or but very imperfectly reach them, you muſt comfort yourſelf with the reflection, that you have ſtrained every nerve to do all you could with the means and faculties granted you by God, and that under the government of a wiſe and gracious providence even thoſe honeſt endeavours, whereof we do not diſcern the ſucceſs, cannot be abſolutely loſt.

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That you may not be diſheartened in this employment, frequently call to mind, fifthly, the manifold and great advantages you may derive to yourſelf in regard to your moral character or your intrinſic perfection from a rational and chriſtian care of education. As long as we live upon earth, my friends, ſo long do we live in a ſtate of exerciſe and diſcipline. We are all to be educated to a better life, to a ſuperior happineſs; and this education ceaſes not till death. Here we can never ſay, that we are as wiſe, as good, as virtuous, as we may be and become; and woe to them who think, at any period of their lives, that they have reached that mark, and take no more pains to ſtrive at a higher perfection! Soon will they loſe even the ground they have gained, and find themſelves again at the entrance of the courſe which they had half completed. Parents, teachers, guardians, if you love yourſelves, and are deſirous of correſponding with your ſituation, let the buſineſs of education which is your bounden duty, even in this reſpect be of the utmoſt importance to you. It is an excellent means for the advancement of your own perfection. While you labour with earneſtneſs and aſſiduity in forming the minds and the hearts of your children or your pupils, you are at the ſame time procuring new advantages to your own; while you are endeavouring to make others wiſe, you are continually becoming wiſer yourſelves; while you are labouring to improve them, your own improvement is always advancing. The faults you obſerve

obſerve in them will make you more attentive to your own, will ſhew you them in all their alarming conſequences, and fill you with abhorrence at the ſight. The diſorderly appetites and paſſions, which you are endeavouring to moderate and abate in them, will render you vigilant to every attack of theſe foes to your happineſs and peace, and always ſupply you with weapons againſt them. The very dread you muſt always be under, leſt you ſay or do ſomething in the preſence of your children that may make ill impreſſions upon them, will preſerve you from many a trip; it will lay you under a wholeſome reſtraint, and at length make the practice of the moſt arduous virtues habitual to you. What you now do only from neceſſity and prudence or from affection to your children and ſcholars, you will do in time from inclination and principle, from love to God and a delight in virtue. Beſides, you will find a thouſand opportunities for acquiring more knowledge of the human heart, and particularly of your own; for detecting its ſecret wiles and its diſhoneſt views; for applying the precepts of wiſdom and virtue more ſucceſsfully to yourſelf; and by numberleſs exerciſes and maxims of prudence, rendering your duty continually more eaſy and pleaſant. What advantages, my friends! Can we ever too dearly buy them? Shall we have any reaſon to ſay, even when our endeavours have not proſpered to the extent of our wiſhes in regard of others, that we have ſpent our ſtrength in vain, ſince it is apparent that

that ſo much at leaſt accrues from it to our perſonal advantage.

Laſtly, often rouſe yourſelf to diligence in the buſineſs of education by lively ideas of the importance of it. Above all things let your own experience inform you of the great influence a good or bad education has on all the future years of life. If you have yourſelf enjoyed a good education; frequently call to mind how much you are beholden to it; from how many faults and exceſſes it has preſerved you; what numberleſs times you have felt the force of the good principles you received from your parents or teachers, to your profit and delight; how much it has facilitated the diſcharge of your duties, that you were accuſtomed to them betimes, and that you were taught to combine them with the idea of pleaſure; how far you are advanced in this or the other rare and difficult virtue, becauſe you were exerciſed in it before you became acquainted with vice; how many alleviations and comforts you have found in adverſe circumſtances and in the hour of diſtreſs, becauſe you were taught rightly to judge of the value of things and to prize and apply the conſolations of religion; and then aſk yourſelf whether you do not wiſh your children the ſame advantages, and whether you ſhall not make yourſelf the moſt juſt and moſt cutting reproaches, if by your fault they are forced to forego them? — On the contrary have you had a bad or even no very good education; frequently call to mind the miſ-

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chiefs that have thence ariſen to you, and which probably ſtill ariſe. Say often to yourſelf, are not the faults I ſtill moſt frequently commit and which I find the moſt difficult to reſiſt, the faults which were the leaſt oppoſed in my childhood and earlieſt youth, or treated as indifferent things by thoſe who had the care of my education? Are not the unruly paſſions which ſtill the moſt frequently carry me away and moſt deſtroy my repoſe and happineſs, the very ſame which were moſt indulged in my childhood and earlieſt youth, or even flattered and encouraged? Are not the precepts of wiſdom and duty, to the obſervance of which I am even now obliged to uſe effort, the very ſame that I formerly could tranſgreſs and actually did tranſgreſs without ſcruple and without alarm, becauſe I ſaw them tranſgreſſed without reluctance by thoſe under whoſe care I was placed? Are not the virtues which now coſt me moſt pains and conflict and ſelf-denial to practiſe, the very ſame in which I was formerly ſeldom or never exerciſed? And ſhall I not do all that lies in my power to ſave my children all this pains, this ſtruggle, this conſtraint, this conflict with themſelves, to preſerve them from the cruel tyranny of evil paſſions, to make what is difficult to me eaſy to them, to render the narrow path of life, of virtue and happineſs, as ſmooth and pleaſant as it can be to them, and as now it would have been to me, if I had had a better education? Shall I give them cauſe hereafter to think on me with diſpleaſure, to groan under the

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ſad effects of my negligence probably all their lives, and load me with deſerved reproaches for it?

Again, add reflection to what your own experience tells you on the ſubject, and let that likewiſe teach you the exceeding great importance of education. Repreſent to yourſelf how durable the firſt impreſſions generally are which we receive of natural and moral objects; how deep the firſt doctrines, principles, affections, habits, whether good or bad, ſtrike root in the human ſoul; how great in particular the force of example; how much the underſtanding and temper of the childiſh, juvenile, and manly age are dependent on each other, how firmly they are grounded in each other, and therefore how much is effected by the firſt formation of the mind and heart. Frequently repreſent to yourſelf, that your children, your ſcholars, will ceaſe in time to be children or ſcholars; that they will ſhortly obtain the full uſe of their liberty, and be left to the management of themſelves; that they then enter into various connections with other perſons; that they will probably fill important poſts in the church or the ſtate; that, in whatever ſtation they are placed, they will have always a greater or leſs influence on the welfare of many others; that they probably may make thouſands either happy or unhappy, according as their temper and conduct ſhall be framed: and then advert to the important conſequences which a good or bad education may and muſt have in all theſe reſpects. Think on the

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great and laſting ſervice you afford by a wiſe and chriſtian education to the whole body of ſociety, and compare it with the immenſe and irreparable injury you bring upon it by the omiſſion or neglect of this duty. Figure to yourſelf in particular the influence which the education you give your children or your ſcholars, will have on the education they will hereafter beſtow on their children or ſcholars; and tremble at the thoughts of committing errors, which the reverence wherein you are held will in a manner ſanction, and which may be even injurious to your children's children, to remote poſterity.

To conclude, tranſport yourſelf, for giving more force and efficacy to theſe conſiderations; frequently tranſport yourſelf in imagination to your death-bed; and there let your children and their offſpring be gathered round you. Aſk yourſelf, what at that time will contribute moſt to your repoſe and to your conſolation? Will it be the recollection of the multiplicity of diſſipations and diverſions you have ſhared in, to the neglect of their careful and chriſtian education; or the thoughts on the continued and earneſt pains you have employed in training up your children to virtue? Will it be the idea of the riches and jewels that you leave to your heirs, and the other outward diſtinctions you have procured them; or the ſentiment of the wiſe leſſons, and the virtuous and godly example you have ſet before them? Would you then remain firm to the principles and maxims you have communicated to them,

and enjoin them with your dying lips what you have conſtantly recommended to them by your words and deeds; or would you then ſee yourſelf conſtrained to alter your language, to condemn your own principles and your own conduct, to warn them of the fatal influence of it, and to repreſent to them, as things which have miſerably deceived you, and are unworthy of eſteem and love, what you have taught them to eſteem and to prize above all things? Which will render your departure from them moſt eaſy? If you can ſay to them: I leave you in the poſſeſſion of treaſures, of honour, of power, of all the means to procure the pleaſures of ſenſe, and to gratify your paſſions; or if you are able to addreſs them thus: I leave you wiſdom and virtue and the fear of God, as the guides and companions of your life, and the favour of heaven and the hope of a bleſſed immortality for your laſting comfort? Oh what reproaches, what anguiſh of mind, what ſtings of conſcience, muſt neglected education cauſe to parents, or teachers and guardians, in the laſt days and hours of their life, on beholding their children, or their wards and pupils, through their fault running the career of folly and vice; when they repreſent to themſelves all the dreadful conſequences their negligent conduct may and probably will produce to their remote, ſtill unborn, poſterity; when they reflect on the account they muſt ſhortly give to the omniſcient

judge of the univerſe; when they tranſport themſelves by meditation into the eternal world, and have reaſon to fear that they ſhall there be accuſed by their children and deſcendants as the occaſion of their ruin! Can you conceive a more deplorable condition than this? — On the other hand, how vaſt muſt be the pleaſure, how tranſporting the joy, which muſt diffuſe itſelf through the ſouls of parents and teachers at their departure from the preſent ſcene, on beholding thoſe who were committed to their care proceeding along the path of wiſdom and virtue; when they contemplate them as good, uſeful, pious perſons, citizens, parents, teachers, magiſtrates, ſubjects; when they think on the bleſſed influence of their ſentiments and example on the general happineſs of their brethren; when they have juſt reaſon to conſider themſelves in the light of benefactors both to the preſent and the future generations of mankind, and thence obtain the well-founded hope of rejoining them hereafter in a better world who were the deareſt to them here, and of enjoying in their ſociety the fruits of their mutual integrity! What feelings, my friends! What proſpects! How glorioufly will they be recompenſed for their pains and care, how richly will they be remunerated for whatever vain and tranſient pleaſures they may have ſacrificed to the faithful diſcharge of their duty! Oh may you all who have any ſhare in the buſi-

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neſs of education, or ought to be engaged in it, hereafter taſte the ſweets of this reward, and be animated now by the idea of it to perſevering fidelity in the execution of this moſt ſacred of truſts!

SERMON VI.

Some of the principal and moſt uſual Faults in Education.

GOD, by the conſtitution which thou haſt eſtabliſhed in nature, the children of men are born in an extremely feeble and dependent condition. Far more weak and dependent, liable to far more accidents than the beaſts of the field, they make their entrance on this ſtate of being. And it is only by ſlow degrees, not till late, that they arrive at greater ſtrength and independence. But this alſo is the arrangement of thy wiſe paternal kindneſs. It is thy deſign to elevate us far above the brute creation, by forming us into rational, moral creatures; and this cannot be effected but by intercourſe with other already more evolved creatures, not without continual inſtruction from them; and this intercourſe, this inſtruction would not take place, if thou hadſt not ſo intimately connected us together and made us ſo dependent on each other. O everlaſting Father, we adore thy will, and thank thee

thee for the connections in which thou haſt placed us both with our parents and with our children, and for the manifold advantages thou haſt granted us thereby. Bleſs to the furtherance of thy gracious purpoſes in this reſpect, the conſiderations in which we are now about to engage. Let us attentively and impartially hearken to the voice of truth, and with willing obedience follow her ſuggeſtions and precepts. Theſe and all other mercies we implore thee to grant us in the name of our ſaviour Jeſus, who in every good leſſon and example is the ſpotleſs pattern of our conduct, and who alſo taught us in what form it behoves us to preſent our requeſts unto thee. Our father, &c.

EPHES. vi. 4.

Ye fathers, — bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

AS the education of children, the formation of their mind and their heart, is undoubtedly the moſt important, ſo likewiſe is it the moſt arduous taſk of parents. When we conſider how much depends on the firſt impreſſions that are made on the human mind; how deep they ſink, and how difficult it is to efface them afterwards; when we conſider how ſtrong and almoſt invincible the authority of prejudice and cuſtom is, and how much trouble it coſts us to forſake the way we have often trod, on which

we have found many comforts and ſatisfactions, and which we have long taken for the ſafeſt and the beſt: we muſt infallibly perceive of what infinite moment it is, whether we imbibe good or bad, true or falſe principles and rules of conduct early in our youth, whether the goods and advantages of this world are repreſented to us in this manner or in that, whether we are imbued with groveling or generous ſentiments, whether virtue and piety are inſtilled into us, or whether our hearts are allured to vice and to a contempt for God and Chriſt. Everything afterwards turns out accordingly. We have accordingly more or fewer difficulties to conquer on the way of virtue; and accordingly will it be eaſier or harder for us to reach our deſtination, and to be happy here and hereafter. How important therefore on theſe conſiderations muſt the education of children be! But on the other hand how arduous the undertaking! When we conſider how much attention, intelligence, care, patience and perſeverance are requiſite, and how much pains it demands, to oppoſe the current of general, but not therefore the leſs hurtful manners and cuſtoms; when we conſider, what a diverſity there is in the natural capacities, the propenſities and characters of mankind, how eaſily we may run into extremes either on one ſide or on the other, by being too ſevere or too lenient, and how often we are tempted to indolence and relaxation in our efforts, from the uncertainty of ever reaping the fruit we expected from

from them: we muſt ſoon find, that this taſk preſuppoſes conſiderable abilities, and is attended with much trouble. However, the more certain it is, pious hearers, that the education of children is an extremely important and difficult buſineſs, ſo much the more reaſon had the apoſtle to exhort chriſtians to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and ſo much the leſs will you be diſſatisfied with me, if I diſcourſe to you to-day on a duty of ſuch univerſal obligation, which is ſo ſeldom obſerved with due care, and yet on the obſervance whereof the welfare of thoſe that are the deareſt to us in a great meaſure depends. But, as the ſubject is too copious to be treated of at once in its full extent, I ſhall do no more at preſent than warn you of ſome of the principal and moſt uſual miſtakes in the education of children. Do thou, o God, thyſelf diſpoſe the hearts of my hearers to a ready acceptance of theſe ſuggeſtions, and excite them to the faithful application of them. Diſpell by the light of truth, the prejudices that may have hitherto ſtood in their way, and let the fruit of this diſcourſe be manifeſted in the virtuous conduct of the children whom thou haſt entruſted to them!

The firſt fault I obſerve in the education of children is this, that ſenſuality is allowed to gain the aſcendancy over them, and that this ſource of moral corruption is not ſufficiently checked. The creator has doubtleſs given us the ſenſes for wiſe and good purpoſes. They are the means whereby we acquire

our firſt conceptions and ideas. They ſupply our reaſon with matter for thought and conſideration. They warn us of what is pernicious, what may hurt our body, impair our health, and deſtroy our life. They are inſtruments by which the author of our nature has made us ſuſceptible of various pleaſure; and we ſhould run counter to his will, were we entirely to deprive ourſelves of this pleaſure, or hold it to be abſolutely ſinful. By means of the images of outward things which we acquire by the ſenſes, ſenſations are produced in us, which in many caſes are able of themſelves alone, to give the needful vivacity to our determinations, and to guard us from the detriment which cold and tedious deliberation in limited creatures like us might occaſion; ſenſations that irreſiſtibly impel us to many actions, which we ſhould either totally neglect, or which we ſhould not perform with due promptitude and ſpirit, were we barely directed by the deciſions of reaſon. But, uſeful and neceſſary as ſenſible repreſentations and feelings are in all theſe reſpects; no leſs baleful is the influence they have on our character and our conduct, if we depend too much upon them, if we ſubmit to be ruled and governed by them. This however happens whenever we judge of the qualities and value of external objects merely by the impreſſion they make on our ſenſes; whenever we ſo far addict ourſelves to ſenſual pleaſures, and thereby ſtrengthen our natural abhorrence to whatever is unpleaſant and painful, that

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we cannot deny ourſelves the former without extreme uneaſineſs, nor ſubmit to the latter without many inward ſtruggles or much outward coercion; that we always, or generally at leaſt, prefer a preſent pleaſure to a future, though the future one be much greater and more laſting than the preſent; and that we are more careful to avoid a trifling preſent evil, than by a voluntary endurance of it to be exempted from a future one that is much more conſiderable and much more laſting. In him that is ſo minded, ſenſuality has the upper hand. But how fertile in pernicious conſequences! Is it not ſenſuality that deprives the ſoul of its vigour, degrades it to a lower rank of creatures, and teaches a man to think and act as if he were entirely carnal? Is it not ſenſuality, which by directing all his thoughts and affections ſolely to the preſent and viſible, deprives him of all avidity and capacity for employment about ſpiritual and heavenly objects, for raiſing himſelf to the inviſible deity, and agreeably to his deſtination providing for the future world? Is it not ſenſuality that inſpires the generality of perſons with an inſuperable abhorrence for everything that is called labour and pains, that requires a particular exertion of the powers of the mind, or a painful oppoſition to our cupidity, and thus hinders them from being anything more in virtue and piety than young beginners? Is it not ſenſuality that for the ſame reaſon renders it ſo difficult, nay impoſſible for them to prefer the general proſperity to their own private

private emolument, to ſacrifice any pleaſures and accommodations to their duty and the happineſs of their brethren, and to engage in ſuch affairs as are of the higheſt utility to ſociety, but unpleaſant and troubleſome in themſelves? In ſhort, is it not ſenſuality which diſables them to maintain the dignity of rational and immortal creatures, the dignity of true chriſtians, to form themſelves upon the model of holineſs which their redeemer gave them, and to purſue ſuch a courſe as is conſiſtent with a citizen and inheritor of heaven? But in general do we take the neceſſary pains for preventing theſe ſad effects of a predominant ſenſuality, by a careful and prudent education of children, and thus to eaſe them in the diſcharge of their duties? Do we ſtrive to keep their propenſity to ſenſual pleaſure within due bounds? Do we check the growth of it by proper vigilance and precaution? Do we not rather endeavour all we can to ſtrengthen this propenſity, and to aſſiſt it in gaining the aſcendancy over reaſon? How are children in general incited to the obſervance of their duty, to induſtry and application? Is it not by promiſing them ſuch objects as flatter their ſenſes, pleaſe their palate, amuſe their ſight, &c.? How are they deterred from the commiſſion of this or that folly or fault? Is it not by threatening them with ſuch puniſhments as cauſe them bodily pain, or by depriving them of ſuch benefits and diſtinctions as moſt agreeably affect their ſenſes? Are not thus all their thoughts, appetites

tites and views directed to ſenſible objects? Are they not thus accuſtomed to proceed in their determinations and actions merely according to the ſenſible pleaſure or diſpleaſure they have to hope or to fear from it? And when they have thus thought, judged and acted for ten, fifteen, or a greater number of years, how difficult muſt it be for them afterwards to conduct themſelves by other rules and upon other principles, and to oppoſe and abandon habits that have ſtruck ſuch deep roots within! How ſtrange muſt all that appear to them which reaſon and religion tell us of temperance, of moderation, of ſelf-denial and of maſtering our luſts and appetites! How prompt they will be to decide upon all theſe as extravagant demands, as impoſſible attainments and unneceſſary purſuits, and to exclaim with thoſe jews of old: This is an hard ſaying, who can hear it? Nay, how eaſily may they thence be induced even to reject religion and virtue as too auſtere governors, and to give themſelves up to the groſſeſt exceſſes! Lamentable proſpects for parents, who ſtill retain ſome fear of God, and have the welfare of their children at heart!

Would you preſerve your children from theſe deviations: do your utmoſt to prevent ſenſuality from gaining the aſcendant in their breaſts. Strive to encourage them to obedience and duty more by rational repreſentations ſuited to their capacities of the influence their conduct muſt have on their future

future welfare, than by the preſent and viſible pleaſures of ſenſe. Begin to cultivate their minds as early as poſſible. Teach them betimes to attend to the natural good and ill conſequences of their actions. Endeavour to inſpire them with a predominant love of order and truth. In regard to their diet, their apparel, their employment and mode of life, avoid everything that may adminiſter to indolence, effeminacy, and a too delicate ſenſibility. Shew them no particular tokens of compaſſion even when ſome ſlight miſhap befalls them, or if they ſuffer very tolerable pains, and treat theſe accidents and theſe pains as trifles undeſerving of attention. Set not too great a value on their puerile amuſements. Accuſtom them by degrees to view ſuch objects as are agreeable to them and are harmleſs in themſelves, to obſerve whatever is beautiful and excellent in them, and to diſcourſe of them with others, without any violent longings after them, or immoderate trouble at the want of them. But exerciſe them principally in this, to refrain at times from an allowable pleaſure, or abruptly to leave it, for the diſcharge of ſome higher duty, or the performance of ſome weightier buſineſs; and evince greater ſatisfaction at theſe proofs of rational obedience, than at all other demonſtrations of aſſiduity and addreſs. In theſe exerciſes conſiſts all real virtue during the preſent ſtate of diſcipline and trial; and it is impoſſible without them to arrive at any ſuperior degree of proficiency in it.

A ſecond

A ſecond no leſs noxious and common error in the education of children, is that pains are taken to cheriſh their pride, inſtead of repreſſing it, and inſtead of giving them a modeſt and humble opinion of themſelves. There is no vice that more early or more eaſily takes poſſeſſion of the human heart than pride; and yet there is no vice more unbecoming us, feeble, neceſſitous and ſinful creatures, none that keeps us at a greater diſtance from the kingdom of heaven, and leads us into more perilous by-paths than this. We are naturally but too much inclined to account ourſelves far greater and better than we actually are. If this diſpoſition be ſtrengthened and encouraged in our younger years, it ſoon ſo captivates and binds us, that afterwards we may very often labour in vain to free ourſelves from its tyrannical ſway. It has the art of dazzling us in ſuch a manner as to prevent us from ſeeing our own faults and infirmities, and therefore from ever ſetting ourſelves in earneſt to correct them. It makes us deaf to the admonitions and ſuggeſtions of our teachers, our friends, nay of our own conſcience. It prevents us on important occaſions from ſeeking information, counſel and aſſiſtance from others, as we aſcribe more wiſdom, prudence and force to ourſelves than we in fact poſſeſs. We then deſpiſe the temptations to ill, and are plunged into them before we are able to take the proper precautions againſt them. We give ourſelves little or no trouble about improving in knowledge and virtue, imagining

we have already brought ourſelves to a very great degree of perfection in them. We find in ſhort a thouſand difficulties both in the doctrines and precepts of chriſtianity, becauſe they are at variance with our high conceits and our ſinful paſſions; and the terms whereon we are offered grace and ſalvation by the goſpel, diſpleaſe us, becauſe they are in oppoſition to our pride. Can we then ever be too early or too earneſt in combating this foe to our perfection and happineſs? Can we ever be too careful in refuſing it acceſs to the hearts of children? But is this indeed always done, pious hearers? Do we endeavour to inſpire them with modeſt and humble opinions of themſelves? No! On the contrary, we generally neglect nothing that can beget and nouriſh in them ſelf-conceit. They are taught to have high notions of their beauty, or of their illuſtrious pedigree, or of other inſignificant diſtinctions. Every judicious anſwer they give is held up for admiration, every laughable trick by which they amuſe us is pronounced to be a ſign of peculiar acuteneſs and ingenuity. Theſe ambiguous proofs of their wit are repeated in their preſence, and everybody contributes to heighten the encomiums which they do not deſerve. Every inſtance of induſtry or obedience is attributed to them as a peculiar merit; while nothing more ſhould be done than aſſuring them that in this reſpect they have fulfilled their duty, and thus attended to their own advantage. Some people require their children to be

be ſhewn almoſt the ſame tokens of reverence as are due to perſons advanced in life, and even pretend to be affronted when they are treated by others as children. So much intereſt is taken in all that concerns them, in ſupplying their wants before they are felt, in gratifying their wiſhes the inſtant they are formed, that they muſt of neceſſity imagine themſelves important members of ſociety and inveſted with a diſtinguiſhed ſtation in it. On the other hand all their follies and faults are readily excuſed, even though they proceed from premeditated malice. All is attributed to childiſh playfulneſs, to the want of conſideration and attention; at leaſt they are excuſed to others on this ſcore, that the children may be ſpared what is in fact a ſalutary ſhame and confuſion; and thus they are accuſtomed to prize above all things the empty praiſes of men, and to give themſelves more concern about the vain appearance than the eſſentials of rectitude and virtue. But who does not ſee that this nouriſhes pride in their heart, and baniſhes true humility from it?

Would you guard your children from this vice ſo fruitful in pernicious effects, you whom God has made parents, guardians and tutors; often remind them of the feeble, neceſſitous, impotent and dependent condition they are in. Set no higher value on their capacities and good qualities than they actually have. Teach them to conſider all as the unmerited gift of the Moſt High, who never allows us to exalt ourſelves

ourſelves above others, but has made it our moſt indiſpenſable duty by all means to ſerve others and be uſeful to them. Commend them but ſeldom in their preſence, and never permit others to give them extravagant praiſe. Never connive at their faults and tranſgreſſions, and endeavour to bring them to a juſt ſenſe of that moral corruption, which has weakened the powers of the human ſoul, and diſturbed their harmony. Shew them upon all occaſions, how little reaſon they have to boaſt of their health, their beauty, their ſtrength, their talents, their ingenuity, or to rely upon them; how ſoon they may loſe all theſe advantages; how far they are excelled by many others in all theſe reſpects; and how weak, how imperfect, how frail, how unſtable are in general the knowledge, the virtue and the happineſs of mortals. Lead them at length into the ſchool of the Redeemer, inſtruct them in his condeſcending and magnanimous love to mankind; ſet his humility and meekneſs before them, as the pattern for their imitation; and imprint it deeply on their tender and ſuſceptible hearts, that it is impoſſible to be a true chriſtian and to be happy, unleſs we imitate and reſemble the Saviour, no leſs in theſe than in all the virtues. How much would theſe ſentiments facilitate to them the diſcharge of all the other duties of chriſtianity? What a mild and benign light, what a genial luſtre would it diffuſe over all their good qualities and their real merits, and how would they find themſelves ſtimulated

lated by it to diſregard thoſe things that are behind, and to be conſtantly ſtretching forward to ſuperior ſtages of perfection!

A third capital fault in the education of children is, that they are not taught properly to judge of the privileges, pleaſures, and occupations of life. How various are the falſe ideas that are communicated to the infant mind concerning all theſe things; and how fatal the influence which theſe errors afterwards have on the whole of their moral conduct. Children are generally taught to look upon ſuperfluity, elevation, rank, authority, outward reſpect, as poſſeſſions in themſelves deſerving of our utmoſt eſteem, and which confer a real value on ſuch as poſſeſs them; as poſſeſſions, the want or privation whereof renders mankind abſolutely wretched, and which conſequently are worthy of the greateſt endeavours to obtain, and of all poſſible care to preſerve. They are made too early attentive to the difference of ranks in ſociety; their natural diſpoſition to behave themſelves friendly, kind, and ſerviceable to all men, without reſpect of perſons, is thus repreſſed; they are forbidden to diſcover any ſort of familiarity towards perſons of inferior extraction, but of good morals, or even occaſionally to converſe with them; and they are inſpired by degrees, if not with a ſovereign contempt, yet certainly a great indifference and inſenſibility towards all who are not in poſſeſſion of ſo great a fortune or ſuch outward diſtinctions as themſelves. Riches are de-

ſcribed to them as far more deſirable than virtue, poverty and humility as more hideous than vice. The temporal advantages, the pleaſures and diverſions they are in a few years to expect, are depicted to them in ſuch lively and glowing colours, that they long for the enjoyment of them with the utmoſt avidity, and make them the ultimate object of all their wiſhes. And what ſort of inſtruction is generally given them concerning the deſtination of man and the buſineſs of life? We muſt work, it is ſaid, to acquire food and raiment; we muſt keep a ſteady eye to our own intereſt, and let no opportunity eſcape unemployed for promoting it; we muſt uſe all diligence to heap up treaſures, to raiſe ourſelves above meanneſs, and diſtance all thoſe who have the ſame object in view; we muſt entirely comply with the received cuſtoms and manners, be they good or bad, reaſonable or unreaſonable, that we may not be reckoned an unſociable monſter, and thus ſtand in the way of our own advancement; we muſt know how to live, that is, we muſt know how to render ourſelves agreeable to everyone by diſſimulation, flattery and falſehood, and to gain the love of everybody, and to be cautious of ſpeaking what we think, or of judging as the nature of the caſe requires. Theſe are the principal leſſons generally inſtilled into the minds of children preparatory to their entrance on the world, and for rendering them dextrous in the management of their future affairs. No wonder, if in the ſequel, blinded by

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theſe prejudices, they cleave entirely to the earth, if they are actuated by the meaneſt and moſt ſordid ſelfiſhneſs, and are incapable of all generous and magnanimous actions. No wonder if they conform in all reſpects to the world, fall down the ſtream of prevailing corruption without oppoſition or reſiſtance, and ſatisfy themſelves with the empty applauſe, that they are not murderers, not robbers, not profligates. No wonder if the laſt thing they think of is to ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, if they leaſt of all concern themſelves about the improvement and ſalvation of their immortal ſpirit, and ſo live as though after death they had nothing to hope for or to fear.

Parents, are ye deſirous that your children ſhould avoid the ways of folly and vice, would you conduct them into the path of eternal wiſdom; give them ſounder notions of the advantages, the pleaſures and the affairs of this life. Teach them to underſtand theſe objects as analogous to their preſent and future happineſs. Warn them of the deceitfulneſs of ſenſe, of the dazzling luſtre that ſurrounds the great and powerful of the earth, of the apparent happineſs which high ſtation and great wealth promiſe their poſſeſſors. Shew them, that peace of mind and the placid temper are very often to be found in humble dwellings, and but ſeldom in ſplendid habitations and gorgeous palaces. Tell them, that it is not rank, not titles, not authority, that deſerve our eſteem, but the juſt and proper uſe

of them; that only virtue and integrity, the real merit of the man can do him honour, and give him any real precedence above others; and that the meaneſt day-labourer, who is faithful to his duties, is of infinitely more conſideration in the ſight of the Moſt High, than the crowned prince, who miſuſes his power to the oppreſſion of the guiltleſs. Tell them, that only vice degrades the man; that God is as much the creator and father of the poor as of the rich; that we ſhould conſider ourſelves all as brethren, and heartily love and ſerve each other according to our abilities. Inform them how vain and empty are all the delights of the world, how often the acuteſt pain, the bittereſt remorſe, the crueleſt vexations, follow the inordinate enjoyment of them; and how dreadfully they are deceived who ſeek their happineſs in them. Repreſent to them the occupations of this life, the diſcharge of the duties of their calling, not merely as means for procuring a livelihood, or becoming opulent, and paſſing their days in indolence and eaſe, but as means for applying our talents and capacities to the ſervice of our fellow-creatures, and for contributing ſomewhat to the public weal. Teach them to think generouſly and diſintereſtedly, and not to make their own private emolument ſo much as the welfare of the community to which they belong, the ultimate aim of their exertions. Make it often a matter of encouragement to them, that they have an immortal ſoul, capable of a never-ending portion; that

that this earth is not the place where the ſcope and deſign of their being terminate; that the Almighty has formed them for eternity; that he has placed them here in a ſtate of exerciſe and probation, which they are to employ in preparing and qualifying themſelves for the future life, and that this is infinitely the greateſt concern they have here to mind. This way of thinking and judging will ſecure them from the path of corruption, and render them wiſe to everlaſting felicity.

Laſtly I obſerve as a fourth principal fault in the education of children, that we chuſe rather to inſtruct them by precept than by example. Precepts make by no means ſo deep and permanent an impreſſion on them as example; and whenever this is wanting, the other is for the moſt part of no avail. The reaſon of it is apparent. The ſenſes and the imagination in children are far more buſy than the underſtanding; and they are much more diſpoſed to imitate what they ſee and hear, than to inveſtigate the propriety or the impropriety of it by painful reflection. Experience tells us, that very frequently the moſt excellent principles are not able to withſtand the force of bad example; and on the other hand that ſometimes beautiful patterns of virtue and piety will amply ſupply the defect of inſtruction. How often however do parents or tutors content themſelves with giving excellent rules of conduct to their children or pupils, without attending to their obſervance themſelves! Nay how often do they

deprive their doctrines and precepts of their proper effect by purſuing a courſe at variance with them, and render religion and virtue themſelves ſuſpected and contemptible by ſuch inconſiſtency! This is the principal reaſon that all their remonſtrances, cautions, admonitions, and corrections, are ſo frequently to no purpoſe. Their own example counteracts them, and they derive no fruit from all their labours.

Would you enjoy theſe delicious fruits, ye to whom God has entruſted children; demonſtrate the neceſſity, the propriety, the beauty of the virtues you recommend to their regard, by the ſtudious and conſtant practice of them. Would you that your children ſhould fear God and ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth; let a real fear of God be perceptible in you. Never mention that glorious being without the profoundeſt veneration, beware of every abuſe of his ſacred name; frequent the exerciſes of public and private worſhip with undiſſembled devotion; aſcribe all the advantages you enjoy to the unmerited grace of the Moſt High, and adore all his ways in humble ſubmiſſion. Would you that your children ſhould learn juſtice, equity, humanity and liberality; let them be the witneſſes of your hearty endeavours to fulfill theſe duties yourſelf. Condemn, without reſpect of perſons every unjuſt, every mercileſs action; and place it in ſuch a light that it ſhall excite their averſion and abhorrence. Rejoice with them in every opportunity of doing good

good to others, and do not eaſily allow any indigent or afflicted perſon to go from you uncomforted or unrelieved. Would you that your children be temperate, chaſte and modeſt: be cloathed with theſe virtues yourſelf. Avoid everything that is in the moſt diſtant degree offenſive to decorum in your words, your carriage and your actions, whatever may give riſe to irregular thoughts and deſires. Exerciſe yourſelf in abſtinence, and ſhew them, that you can forego many things, which are pleaſant and agreeable, without being therefore uneaſy or unhappy. Would you teach your children gentleneſs and humility; ſuffer not yourſelf to be tranſported by anger in their preſence, but govern your ſpirit. Never boaſt of your diſtinctions, and deſpiſe no man who does not render himſelf deſpicable by folly and vice. Be not imperious and overbearing with thoſe who owe you obedience; and ſhew by your behaviour towards them, that you acknowledge them for your fellow-creatures, that you love them and take an intereſt in their welfare. Forgive with all your heart thoſe that offend you, and take heed not to let any rancorous ſentiments appear. To conclude, would you train up your children to be citizens of heaven; purſue yourſelf a heavenly courſe. Teſtify a generous diſdain for all that is tranſient and earthly. Frequently contraſt the preſent with the future. Look more at the inviſible than at the viſible, and ſo frame your life, that all men may conclude from it; that you have nothing more at heart

than to deliver your ſoul, and to be admitted to the felicities of heaven.

Obſerve but this and the foregoing rules of conduct, and you will certainly no more fall into thoſe miſtakes of which you have been warned in the preſent diſcourſe. You will, according to the admonition in our text, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the Lord will certainly not leave your endeavours unbleſt, if they be but conſtant and ſincere. He will hereafter award to you the glorious recompenſe which he has promiſed to his faithful ſtewards and ſervants. And what a happineſs, what a tranſporting ſatisfaction it will be to you, when you appear, undaunted, before the judge of the living and the dead, when you cheerfully give him an account of the diſcharge of your truſt, and, ſurrounded by your family, can ſay to him: Lord, behold me, and the children whom thou gaveſt me.

SERMONS

ON

REFLECTION.

SERMON VII.

What is meant by Reflection, and ſome Helps to it.

GOD, we know thee, we worſhip thee as the firſt, eternal cauſe of all things, as the only, inexhauſtible, everflowing fount of being, of life, of thought, of energy; as the creator, the ſovereign, the ruler, the father of all living and lifeleſs creatures, of all mankind, of all ſpirits, of all worlds; as our maker and ſovereign and father! Thee we adore in the profoundeſt humility as the Omniſcient, the Omnipreſent, the Omnipotent, the Supremely-good! Yes, thy underſtanding is infinite; it ſurveys and comprehends the paſt, the preſent, the future, the poſſible and the actual. Thy wiſdom is inconceivable and inſcrutable; it never fails of its ends. Thy power is unbounded; thou doſt what thou wilt in heaven and on earth; all is ſubject to thee, the Allpowerful, and thy determination nothing can reſiſt. Thy goodneſs is inexhauſtible, is continually effective, animating and bleſſing all, and endures from everlaſting to everlaſting. Yes, thou art

art conſummate perfection, eſſentially all that is beautiful and good and great and excellent, all that is venerable and lovely. From thee, through thee and to thee are all things, to thee be glory for all eternity! — Happy we, who can elevate our minds to thee, conceive of thee, imperfectly indeed, yet as our father, rejoice in thy providential care and ſoothe our ſouls in thee! Yes, ſmall, inſignificant as we are in ourſelves, loſt as we are in the multitude of thy offspring and ſubjects in heaven and on earth: yet we know, we feel that we proceed from thee, that we likewiſe are thy children, that we are known and beheld and beloved by thee, and that thou as ſurely and as tenderly careſt for our happineſs, as thou careſt for the preſervation of entire generations and worlds. Before thee, the Infinite, nothing is great and nothing little. To thee all is equally preſent, the little as the great, the parts as the whole. — How precious to us, o God, are theſe thoughts! How they elevate our ſoul! How they enlarge our heart! What light they ſhed on all that ſurrounds us! What proſpects they open before us! Oh may they be ever preſent to our minds and dear above all things to our hearts! Oh may we ſucceed in raiſing ourſelves ever more and more above the duſt, in approaching ever nearer to thee, the Inviſible, in perceiving ever more clearly the traces of thy perfection in all thy works and revelations, in ever more inwardly feeling thy exiſtence and thy greatneſs, thy paternal

tenderneſs

tenderneſs and love and in having an ever growing communion with thee! Almighty parent, we implore theſe bleſſings of thee in the name of thy ſon, our lord and ſaviour, Jeſus Chriſt, and addreſs thee farther in his words: Our father, &c.

PSALM cxliii. 5.

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muſe on the work of thy hands.

REFLECTION, my devout audience, rational reflection is the parent of wiſdom, the boſom friend of virtue, the primary ſource of human happineſs. As ſuch it has been recogniſed by the wiſe and good of every age, and it ſtill retains the ſame diſtinction. This reflection is notwithſtanding perfectly ſtrange to many, and apparently very inconvenient to moſt people.

All of us indeed think; we think inceſſantly; the unlearned as well as the learned, the idler as well as the man of buſineſs. Thought is the life of the ſoul, as the life of the body is motion. The former is in ſome meaſure no leſs involuntary than the latter: to think not at all, or entirely to ſuppreſs certain thoughts, is ſtill leſs in our power, than to ſtop the current of the blood or the other juices of our body. We are inceſſantly receiving impreſſions, ſtronger or fainter, from the objects that ſurround us, and from the alterations that ariſe within us;

and of all theſe we form conceptions more or leſs obſcure or perſpicuous, and all theſe we ſeparate or aſſociate, approve or diſapprove in our thoughts. And this we do waking and ſleeping, when we are at work and when we are at reſt, when we are alone and when we are in company. We think therefore continually, as we continually breathe, and our thoughts ſucceed one another as uninterruptedly, as the inward and inviſible motions of our ſolids and fluids. But we generally think ſo curſorily, ſo heedleſsly, that we are even ſcarcely aware of it, that we are not perfectly conſcious of it, that the ideas vaniſh immediately as they ariſe, and leave no obſervable trace behind.

We think therefore very often without reflecting, we comparatively but ſeldom conſider what we have thought. And this is the reaſon that our thoughts are ſo frequently defective in light and vivacity, in truth and certainty, in method and conſiſtence, and to us in force and conviction; the cauſe of our wavering ſo often in our opinions and judgments; and whence alſo it proceeds that knowledge and conduct, belief and acting up to belief are ſo ſeldom in uniſon.

Would we avoid theſe failings, my pious hearers; would we excite ourſelves to reflection, facilitate the practice of it to our minds, and become expert in that grand and important occupation: we muſt before all things ſtudy to underſtand it. We muſt know how we are to ſet about it and what we muſt do,

do, in order to reflect rationally upon any ſubject, and particularly on matters of religion. And to theſe inquiries we will at preſent devote our particular attention.

Wherein then conſiſts reflection? What are its ingredients? How and when do we actually reflect on ſome ſubject?

Reflection generally ſignifies, as the word itſelf imports, to think again on what we have already thought, already conceived, to think on it more circumſtantially, more ſteadily, more expreſsly, and to do this on ſet purpoſe and with conſciouſneſs, in the deſign of dwelling longer on theſe thoughts, in order to diſſect and analyze them, to obtain a clearer conception of the matter to which they relate, to ſtudy them in their ſeveral parts, in their principles and conſequences, to compare them with others, to obſerve their analogies to us and to other objects, and thence to draw concluſions in regard to our conduct or to our happineſs.

For example: God is good. This is a thought which certainly we have often had, often conceived, but on which we perhaps have not often reflected. Would we do ſo, would we reflect on this thought, we muſt ſtop ſhort at it, view it on all ſides, ſee what it contains, and enter upon theſe or the like conſiderations: what means then being good? Wherein conſiſts, whereby is ſhewn the goodneſs of an intelligent being? How is it diſpoſed towards others, how does it relate to others? What impreſſion does

does the ſight of the miſery or the happineſs of others make upon it? And in what inſtances has God revealed his goodneſs? Have I received any proofs of his benevolence and his beneficence towards myſelf? What are theſe proofs? How are they reconcilable with the pains and ſufferings that have ſometimes befallen me? Ought not the goodneſs of God to have great advantages over that of man? Will it not be much wiſer, more impartial, more active, more perſevering? And if it be ſo, what am I to conclude from it? What phænomena will it enable me to explain? Will it not embrace far more objects, far greater views, than I am able to ſurvey? Will it not frequently in the diſtribution of its benefits follow ſuch principles and methods, as to me ſeem extraordinary? Will it not very often be obliged to refuſe me and others things which we hold to be good and deſirable? And ſo forth.

To reflect alſo ſignifies, by the repeated repreſentation and conſideration of what we have already conceived and know, to endeavour to diſcover or to underſtand other things which we either do not yet know, or whereof we have only a dark and confuſed idea, or in regard to which we are ſtill uncertain, whether they be true or falſe, thus or otherwiſe conſtituted. In this caſe we adopt certain propoſitions, eſtabliſh certain propoſitions as principles, which we know from our own experience or from the credible teſtimonies of other perſons, or from any

any other grounds exiſting in the very nature of the object, and then aſk ourſelves: If now this matter be ſo and have theſe analogies, what affinity may it have with thoſe objects that belong to the former, or appear to be like them? Are they really in connection; and in what connection? Do they follow one another as effect, or aim, or condition, or only accidentally? Is not that which in one predicament is true, true alſo in the other? Or are they perhaps irreconcilable? Does one of them diſannul the other? Is it impoſſible to conceive of them both at once?

Thus I know, for inſtance, that God is good, that he is eſſential love: of this both nature and ſcripture aſſure me; and my own heart would revolt at any different idea of the conſummately perfect being. And what elucidation of other truths does this afford me? To what end then has God appointed his creatures? May he perhaps have doomed ſome of them to never-ending miſery? Will he puniſh ſome of them for ſuch defects as proceed from no fault of their's, or never compenſate them? How could he then be eſſential love? Again, what will he require of his creatures? Will he require of them impoſſibilities, things that are above their abilities to perform? Is that reconcilable with ſovereign goodneſs? In ſhort, what may his creatures expect of him? Should they not all expect of him the greateſt happineſs of

which they are ſuſceptible? Can almighty goodneſs do leſs than this?

However, we will try to repreſent yet more preciſely and perſpicuouſly the operations of the human mind, in the act of reflecting on ſomething, and particularly on moral and religious objects. Its reflection has commonly in view the examination of ſome or all of the following queſtions: What is this object, and the nature of it? What reſults from thence? Is it true and certain, and why is it ſo? What relations does it bear to me and my happineſs? How ſhould I act towards it? In other words, by reflection and conſideration we endeavour to render our conceptions and ideas of objects more clear, more complete, more certain, more intereſting and uſeful to us.

In the firſt place therefore, more clear, by aſking ourſelves: What is properly this object? whereof does it conſiſt? whereof is it compounded? what are its neceſſary and eſſential ingredients? what is only adventitious therein? what properties, what efficacies and effects has it? what diſtinguiſhes it from other objects? &c. What therefore is, for example, morality? what are moral actions? This I know, that it is ſomewhat, which of all the creatures of the earth, befits only man, is expected and required of man alone. The brutes cannot act morally. They perform however actions, which, to them or to us, are agreeable or diſagreeable, which

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to them or to us bring utility or prejudice. Therefore, that an action be agreeable or diſagreeable, uſeful or prejudicial to us, makes it not yet a moral action; not an act that can be imputed to us as deſerving praiſe or blame, reward or puniſhment. What then can man do in his agency, that the beaſts of the field cannot do? Wherein does his ſuperiority to them conſiſt? He can reflect on the principles, on the proximate and remote conſequences of actions; he can compare them with the relative ſituations in which he is placed towards others, try them by the teſt of truth, of order, of the general welfare, and regulate them accordingly; he can conſult expreſs laws thereon, and follow them. He can therefore determine himſelf by perceptions, by perſpicuouſly known principles, and without regard to outward accommodations and advantages, to preſent ſenſations, he can do what he holds to be juſt and proper, agreeably to the rules which he recogniſes and reveres as laws; and if he do ſo, he acts as a rational, a moral, a morally good creature. The morality of our actions in general therefore conſiſts in their agreement or diſagreement with our known laws of conduct, whether founded on the nature of things, or on the expreſsly revealed will of God.

Let another example, how we endeavour to analyze and to illuſtrate our ideas by reflection, be the idea of virtue. Here ariſe ſome ſuch conſiderations as: What then properly is that virtue, of

which ſo many talk, and which ſo few poſſeſs? Conſiſts it merely in detached good actions? But ſurely we do not call him virtuous, who but ſeldom does good and uſually evil; him bountiful, who once beſtowed a handſome gift on ſome poor perſon, and afterwards was hard and inexorable towards ten others; him gentle, who for once that he reſtrains his anger, gives it ten times full ſcope. Or does virtue conſiſt in avoiding particular kinds of faults, and in practiſing certain kinds of moral good, without a punctual adherence to the law in other reſpects? But does indeed the temperate man, who is at the ſame time avaricious, the bountiful man, who is intemperate, the devout man, who is auſtere and uncharitable, the meek and obliging man, who is a voluptuary, deſerve the appellation of a virtuous man? Or ſhould we think it merited by him, who indeed performs many good actions, but performs them from neceſſity, from vanity, from vile ſelf-intereſt, from ſervile dread of puniſhment? Virtue is expreſſive of a certain nobleneſs in temper and conduct that is incompatible with theſe. To conſtitute virtue it muſt therefore be eſſentially requiſite, that we love good for itſelf, that we love all good, that we love it at all times and in all circumſtances; that we love it decidedly and more than all things elſe, more than the pleaſures of ſenſe and outward diſtinctions; that we do it always willingly and gladly, and rejoice in having done it. Virtue is therefore a certain frame and temper of mind conſtantly

ſtantly actuating the man and regulating the whole of his conduct.

A ſecond occupation of the reflecting man, whereby he endeavours to render his ideas more complete and fruitful, is in conſidering, what may reſult from what he knows, what he believes, from this or that propoſition, from this or that doctrine? what he may thence infer? what ſolutions they yield concerning other things? what applications may be made of them? Therefore, what enſues, for inſtance, from the foregoing idea of the morality of man and his actions? It follows, that I am bound to acquire a continually better knowledge of myſelf, my faculties, my deſtination, my relations towards others, the will of God in nature and in ſcripture, and never to loſe ſight of theſe ſeveral objects. It follows, that I need not act blindly, inconſiderately, from mere inſtinct alone, not merely conſult what is agreeable or diſagreeable to me, not like the brutes ſtop ſhort at the preſent moment, and follow the firſt impulſe or impreſſion; but that I ſhould conſider every matter, determine only upon mature deliberation, govern myſelf preciſely by the laws preſcribed me, and connect the preſent to the future, if it be expedient for me to act as a moral creature, to be accountable for my behaviour and capable of a reward.

What reſults farther from that idea of virtue? It reſults, that virtue is an indiviſible whole, that it is properly but one, that we are either entirely, or not

at all virtuous; that virtue has its ſeat in the heart, that it extends to our ſentiments and affections and views as well as to our actions, that it is not confined to particular times and places, not to the hours of devotion and divine worſhip, that it muſt be our conſtant companion and guide.

One more example. What follows, if my ſpirit be immortal, if ſhe continue to exiſt, to live, to act after the death of the body; if her future ſtate be a continuation of the preſent? She will here have either approximated her proper end, her perfection, or have receded from it; and that will there occaſion her joy or torment. She will retain many of her former conceptions; and theſe will be either agreeable or diſagreeable, ſoothing or painful to her. She will have a clear conſciouſneſs of her priſtine ſtate and of her behaviour in it, for this conſciouſneſs is what diſtinguiſhes her from the brutes, what elevates her to a human intellect: and how vaſt an influence muſt this conſciouſneſs have upon her happineſs! She will take along with her certain affections, appetites, habitudes into that ſtate; and which will then continue to be good or bad, generous or ſordid, ſources of ſatisfaction or ſources of diſquietude and miſery. Immortality may therefore not be alike joyful to every one, it may be ſo to thoſe alone, who have here ſo thought and lived as behoves beings who are deſigned for ſuch great ends.

A third occupation of the reflecting man conſiſts in examining into the truth of what he knows and believes,

believes, or what is reported to him, inquiring into the reaſons of it, and ſtriving to obtain completer certainty. Accordingly he aſks himſelf: Is that which I hold to be true, or which others give out as ſuch, really true, and what evidences have I in behalf of it? How does this propoſition, this doctrine tally with what I have elſewhere learnt, remarked, obſerved, with what I take to be demonſtrated, irrefutable truth? How does it ſuit as it were with the reſt of my knowledge and perceptions? How does it aſſimilate with it? What does reaſon ſay, what do the ſcriptures ſay of it? What do others, eſpecially intelligent and wiſe men think of it?

Therefore, why do I believe, for inſtance, that my ſpirit is immortal, that a ſtate of retribution awaits me? What ſays my underſtanding, what ſays my heart to this doctrine? Does it not elucidate to the former numberleſs particulars, which would otherwiſe remain perfectly myſterious to it? Does it not procure to the latter that calm repoſe, which it otherwiſe could nowhere find? Is it not grounded in the nature of my ſpirit, which may continually become more perfect, and is always ſtriving after greater perfection? Has it not grand, noble diſpoſitions and capacities, which can never here be thoroughly evolved and brought to effect? Has it not appetences, which no terreſtrial good can ſatisfy? Is it not capable of having communion with the deity, and ever ardently deſirous of coming

nearer to that moſt exalted being? Do not however all theſe diſpoſitions and capacities and energies and appetences and longings proceed from God, and will he, the Omniſcient, the Omnipotent, leave his work unfiniſhed, and raiſe in us hopes and expectations, which he never intends to fulfil? Do not theſe expectations moſt harmoniouſly accord with all that we know of God and his attributes? Again, is not man a moral agent placed under the ſuperintendance and government of a righteous judge and rewarder, and are his fortunes here always and completely correſpondent to his behaviour? And what can, what muſt I infer from what I ſee and obſerve in the world, among mankind? Do I not everywhere perceive far more prediſpoſitions and deſignments than completion, far more preparation than enjoyment; everywhere ſchools and exerciſes of intellect and virtue, but few ripe products from them; everywhere means to ſuperior ends, and laborious efforts to attain them, but no object worthy of theſe means and theſe efforts? Find I not everywhere abſolute diſorder, abſolute confuſion, abſolute inconſiſtency in the moral world, if our deſtination be limited to this life, if there be no futurity to elucidate the preſent and reduce all to agreement? And what finally do the ſcriptures teach me on this head? What a radiant light do they diffuſe on the ſubject! How authentically do they aſſure me of its truth! What proſpects do they diſcloſe to my view by the reſurrection

rection of Jeſus and his living in glory! And what grounds have I not to reſign myſelf to him and to truſt in his promiſes! How credible then to me muſt the doctrine of my immortality in all reſpects be, and how ſtrong is my obligation, ſtedfaſtly to adhere to it, even though I ſhould find difficulties in it, which I am not able to unravel!

A fourth occupation of the reflecting man conſiſts in endeavouring by reflection to render his conceptions and ideas more important and intereſting to him. And the proceſs is in aſking himſelf: In what relations do theſe objects, theſe doctrines ſtand towards me and my happineſs? What are they to me, what do they afford me, what do they promiſe me? What can, what ſhould I be to them? Is that truth likewiſe profitable and conſolatory to me? Might this error be alſo dangerous to me? Is that precept, that rule of life valid alſo to me? Are thoſe ſources of pleaſure, of conſolation, of joy open likewiſe to my uſe? Are theſe benefits, theſe felicities prepared alſo for me?

If I therefore, for example, am reflecting on the arrangements and inſtitutions of God in nature, and I would ſee the importance of theſe ideas to me, I interrogate myſelf: Have not theſe arrangements, theſe inſtitutions of God alſo my preſervation, my ſatisfaction, my accommodation in view? Did not the Omniſcient and All-bountiful think alſo on me and provide for me in them? Should not I alſo recognize in them his parental tenderneſs and exult therein?

therein? How many benefits and conveniences have they not already procured me! How many others may I not yet promiſe myſelf from them! How much more good than evil have I not already experienced, and what does not this allow me to hope for in future! And how important, how intereſting is all nature to me, when I conſider it as the means and inſtrument whereby the deity proſpers all his creatures, and likewiſe me, and conducts us to our deſtination!

Would I farther, that I may offer you another example, my pious hearers, reflect upon religion, and that with inward participation, I aſk myſelf: What is religion to me, and what its office? Is it only to occupy my mind, and to leave my heart unmoved and cold? To ſettle and regulate my conceptions and ideas, but not my ſentiments and my conduct? Does it not inform me of the relations in which I ſtand towards God, the creator and ruler of the world; and do not my exiſtence, my ſatisfaction, and the whole of my happineſs reſt upon theſe relations? How cloſely, how intimately therefore is it connected with all that I conceive and do, with whatever I expect and deſire! What may, what ſhould not religion then be and afford to me! Can I poſſibly diſpenſe with her inſtruction, her counſel, her conſolation, her encouragement? May and ſhould ſhe not be a light to my feet, my conſtant companion and friend along the frequently clouded, frequently toilſome path of life? What

influence

influence however has ſhe hitherto had on my conduct and my repoſe? How far am I become wiſer, better, happier by her? How far more ſo might I not be were her leſſons more conſtantly preſent to my mind, and if I more faithfully followed her precepts? What light would then accompany me in all my ways! With what vigour would ſhe inſpire me! With what hope and aſſurance would ſhe refreſh my ſoul!

To conclude; the reflecting man endeavours to render the objects, the doctrines whereon he reflects more profitable to him by applying them to his conduct, by deducing from them ſuch principles and rules as may regulate him for the reſt of his life. Thus he learns real, practical wiſdom, and without that all human reflection is of no great value. If I therefore, for inſtance, in like manner as before reflect upon religion and its analogies to my happineſs, I aſk myſelf: How muſt I then behave towards religion? How regard and treat it, that it may be and afford to me, what it is adapted to be and afford? Need I reſtrict it to particular times and places, and ſeparate it from the ordinary, diurnal occupations of my life? Have I occaſion for it only in the church, and not likewiſe in the world; only when attending the offices of divine worſhip, and not alſo in my affairs, and in my relaxation from buſineſs? Is it not here and there, there and here equally profitable, equally ſoothing, equally indiſpenſable to me? Can and will ſhe in one inſtance guide

guide me ſafely, if I hold not by her and follow her directions in the other? Have I not everywhere and at all times occaſion for light and force and courage and comfort and hope? And who ſhall give them to me, if religion do not? Muſt I not therefore combine it with all that I intend and do, and that befalls me through the whole courſe of my life? Should its doctrines be ever unwelcome, its precepts be ever indifferent to me? Should not thoſe be perpetually preſent to my mind, and theſe always ſacred to me? Should I not attend to all the ſuggeſtions of religion, follow all her inſpirations, and ſubmit to be entirely animated and governed by her ſpirit? Should I not continually become more acquainted and familiar with her, if I would be as good and as happy through her, as ſhe can render me, and as I myſelf ſhould wiſh to become?

Theſe, my friends, are the principal occupations of the mind relative to reflection. Thus the reflecting man revolves in thought: What is that which I now conceive? What are its properties? How is it conſtituted? What reſults from it? On what is this idea founded? Is it true or falſe? What evidences have I in its behalf? In what ways does this matter, this truth relate to me and my happineſs? How ſhould I act towards it? In this manner he endeavours to render his conceptions and ideas of the moſt important objects progreſſively more perſpicuous, more complete, more certain,

more

more intereſting and uſeful. And this is the buſi-neſs, the daily, the favourite occupation of every man, who knows and feels his dignity and his deſti-nation, who aſſerts his rank among the creatures of God, and with the earneſtneſs of a being created for immortality, is in purſuit of wiſdom, of virtue, of happineſs!

SERMON VIII.

The primary Objects of Rational and Chriſtian Reflection; and Exerciſes in Reflection upon them.

GOD, the heavens and the earth reſound with thy praiſe, all creatures, whether living or inanimate praiſe thee, the ſands on the ſhore and the ſun in the firmament, the reptile that creeps in the duſt, and the eagle that ſoars above the clouds, the beaſts of the field and the ſongſters of the grove, man and angel, all, that is and lives and feels and thinks; for all bears witneſs of thy power and wiſdom and goodneſs, all is beautiful and good and perfect in its kind, all enjoys the ſatisfaction and the happineſs which it is capable of enjoying, and all is ſtriving after greater perfection and happineſs, and will moſt aſſuredly not ſtrive after it in vain! — And we, whom thou haſt ſo eminently favoured above the other creatures of the earth, we whom thou haſt formed after thy likeneſs, and haſt made but little lower than the angels, ſhall we not join the choral hymn and add our voices to the general ſong of

of thy immenſe creation, ſhall not we with heart and mouth praiſe thee, who art and waſt and wilt be, God for all eternity! — Yes, thankſgiving and praiſe be to thee, the All-bountiful, for all that we are and have and know and can and may do; for our exiſtence and our life, and the continuance and the enjoyment of our exiſtence and our life; for every faculty of our mind, every member and every ſenſe of our body, every excellence of our nature; for all the connections in which thou haſt placed us in the viſible and inviſible world, and all the proſpects that thou haſt thus thrown open to us? Oh continue thy watchful eye of providence over us this day, and for ever. Teach us to do thy will, for thou art our God, and let the praiſes and the prayers and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in thy ſight, for the ſake of thy infinite mercies in Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of thy love, our lord and ſaviour, in whoſe name we farther addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

PROV. iv. 26.

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be eſtabliſhed.

WHEREUPON ſhould we as rational beings and as chriſtians principally and moſtly reflect? And how can and ſhould we exerciſe ourſelves in theſe reflections, my pious hearers?

Properly

Properly ſpeaking we can and ſhould reflect upon all things; conſtantly keep up a clear conſciouſneſs of ourſelf and of the alterations that ſucceſſively take place in our mind, compare them with what we already know, and try them by the rules of truth; never judge, decide, chuſe, act without conſideration. And nothing is, nothing happens that is unworthy of our reflection, and whereupon we might not reflect with both profit and pleaſure. Accordingly, the man who knows and feels his mental powers, who properly cultivates his underſtanding, has already enured himſelf to reflection, and experienced the ſatisfaction and delight that attends it, reflects upon all things more or leſs; upon whatever he ſees and hears, thinks and does, whatever betides himſelf and others. The field of his reflection is unbounded, is immenſe. Heaven and earth, the animate and inanimate creation, whatever is within him and without him, the paſt, the preſent and the future, the poſſible and the actual: all excite his attention, and invite him to reflection. He walks not, like the vain and wanton, thoughtleſs and inſenſible about this magnificent theatre of divine munificence. His ſenſes and his heart are always pliant to the impreſſions of the true, the beautiful and good; and his mind is ever ready and alert to admit, to arrange, to compare, to examine them, and to employ them in correcting his perceptions and knowledge, to the advancement of his perfection. And happy the man whoſe capacity, ſituation and leiſure allow

allow him to take in ſo many objects of reflection, to employ himſelf ſo often and ſo continuedly upon them, and to enjoy the pleaſure of it to ſo high a degree! This however can be the lot and deſtination of only a few. Accordingly we ſhould here likewiſe learn to diſtinguiſh and ſelect. Not every application of our mental powers, not every exerciſe of reflection is neceſſary and profitable to us in the ſame degree; and the more we are ſtraightened in this reſpect by outward circumſtances and the affairs of our vocation, the more carefully ſhould we employ the force and the leiſure they leave us in reflection on thoſe, in the knowledge whereof we are the moſt deeply concerned.

Which then, my pious hearers, are the moſt important objects of human reflection? And what ought we principally to obſerve, inveſtigate, conſider in reflecting upon them?

Man, his nature, his appointment, his dignity; God and religion; Chriſt and chriſtianity; virtue and vice and their ſeveral conſequences; the value of things; the moral quality of the heart and conduct; happineſs and miſery; mortality and immortality; connection of the preſent with the future: theſe are the objects that are moſt worthy of our reflection, and the diſcuſſion and conſideration whereof promiſe us the greateſt utility and pleaſure. And how grand, how important are they all! How intimately connected with our perfection and happineſs!

Is it expedient then that we apply our reflection to the moſt momentous objects; we muſt often reflect upon ourſelves, upon our nature, our faculties, our deſtination, our dignity, upon the apparently ſtrange mixture of ſtrength and weakneſs, of greatneſs and littleneſs peculiar to man. And what matter is here for reflection! A taſk not leſs worthy than arduous; pregnant with as much profit as pleaſure. Never can man indeed dive to the bottom of his own eſſence; never explore all the wonders preſented to him in the ſtructure of his body and the activity of his intellect; but never is he occupied upon himſelf in vain; never does he return from this buſineſs without abundant gains. The more juſtly he learns to weigh his ſtrength againſt his weakneſs, his limitations and defects againſt his advantages: the better will he be able to employ the one, and the more eaſily and calmly ſubmit to the other. The more acquainted he is with himſelf, the more reaſons will he diſcover for triumphing in his exiſtence and his deſtination; the more fully will he be able to enjoy the former and the more ſecurely approach the latter. To heedleſſneſs and the want of ſelf-knowledge and ſelf-conſciouſneſs are to be imputed the generality of our tranſgreſſions as well as moſt of our ſufferings and diſtreſſes.

My body is indeed formed of duſt, and will reſolve again to duſt. But am I then entirely duſt; entirely tranſient? Is there not ſomething within me, that riſes far ſuperior to the duſt, that mounts far

far above all that is earthly and viſible, that ſoars even to the great firſt cauſe of all things, even to the deity, and is of a totally different nature and quality from the outward crumbling objects, with which it is at preſent in connection? Acts not my mind by entirely different laws from thoſe which actuate my body or any other bodies that I know? Acts it not far more freely, quite otherwiſe than that which animates the brute creation, and directs their movements and actions? Can it not reſiſt every ſenſual inſtinct, every impreſſion and impulſe from without? Has it not the gift of diſcretion, of free agency, which is not only not a mechanical power, but is not the property of any beaſt of the field? Can it not diſcriminate itſelf from all that is without it? Can it not look back upon the paſt, and forward into futurity, and connect both with the preſent? And how greatly does this elevate me above the whole lifeleſs and irrational creation! How much nearer it brings me to my creator and father!

Yes, I bear his image, I am of divine deſcent, I am capable of a perpetually increaſing perfection. This life cannot be my entire, my ſole deſtination; it can only be the firſt, the lowermoſt ſtep of my human exiſtence. Here I am to prepare and qualify myſelf for greater matters; and the more faithfully I here maintain my poſt, the higher gradations of perfection and happineſs I may hope to climb in the ſucceeding periods of my being. Yes, my appointment is honourable, is grand indeed! Glorious is

the prize that is ſet before me! Worthy of my utmoſt exertions, my unabated ardour in running and contending for it!

Here indeed light and darkneſs, ſtrength and weakneſs, progreſs and oppoſition, elevation and abaſement, great and little, are ſo combined in my nature and condition, and their reciprocal ſucceſſion are often ſo ſudden and perceptible, that I not unfrequently ſink as low and my inſignificance is as palpable to me, as I before had exalted my head and was ſenſible to my grandeur and elevation. But even this has its ſeat in the nature of man; this too is adapted to the ſtate of practice and diſcipline, in which I now live; and this alſo futurity will explain. I ſhould not, I cannot at once be and become, all that I am deſtined to be and to become. But I ſhall everlaſtingly proceed and everlaſtingly draw nearer to perfection.

And this is called reflecting upon oneſelf and our faculties and our appointment. Herein let us exerciſe ourſelves, my pious auditors, and if we cannot always take in ſo wide a range of thought, let us one while contemplate our nature on one ſide, and then on another, now this, now that faculty of our mind, or our body, now one, now another part of our deſtination, now this, now that particular intimation of our preſent or future greatneſs, now this, now that feature of the image of God, that even ſhines amid the darkneſs of this nether world. Attentively let us purſue the proceſs of our conceptions concerning

ing all theſe points, compare them with what we are taught by experience, by reaſon and ſcripture, and thus endeavour to become more familiarly acquainted with ourſelves from day to day.

God and the relations in which we ſtand towards him, his will and his diſpoſitions towards us, his revelations in nature and in ſcripture, all that appertains to religion, compoſe a ſecond claſs of the objects that are moſt worthy of our reflection.

What ſhould we, what would the whole univerſe be without God? What a confuſed chaos beneath a ſurface of apparent regularity! How inexplicable to our intellect! How joyleſs, how melancholy to our heart! What idea then could more worthily occupy our thinking principle, could merit more our moſt ſerious reflection, than the idea of God? Where ſhall we look for one that darts more light into our mind, and ſheds more ſerenity and contentment into our heart; what idea is more variouſly and intimately connected with all that we are and do and behold and expect; what idea is more inexhauſtible in information and ſatisfaction, than this grand and bleſſed idea which compriſes all truth, all wiſdom, the reaſon of all things!

It indeed occaſions us to deſcry abyſſes, which we cannot and never ſhall be able to fathom; but likewiſe unbounded proſpects of whatever is beautiful and good, whatever is great and excellent, whatever is venerable and amiable. We here come to fences which we are never able to leap; between them

however we diſcover luminous, charming paths to ever greater knowledge, to ever higher perfection. Is the deity in ſome reſpects a God that hideth himſelf: yet in others all that is without him is the effect of him, revelation of him, the ſtamp of his power, the reflexion of his glory.

Only attend, o thou ſoul that art thirſting for the knowledge of thy God, to theſe his revelations; hearken to the voice of nature, proclaiming and extolling her creator; everywhere follow the veſtiges of his wiſdom and bounty; compare them together; aſcend from the effect to the cauſe, from the work to the artificer, and judge from thoſe of theſe. In theſe reflections adhere ſtedfaſtly to the leading idea of the firſt and conſummately perfect being, from whom, by whom and to whom are all things; allow this idea gradually to unfold itſelf; apply it with ever increaſing diligence to all that is and that happens, to all that thou conceiveſt and knoweſt of God; clear by this means thy conceptions of that moſt exalted being more and more from whatever is weak, limited, low, human, from all that can imply want, defect, mutability, paſſion, increment or diminution of perfection, thus ſeeking to bring them to the utmoſt degree of perſpicuity, of purity, of ſublimity of which at preſent mankind are capable.

Let thy meditations ſometimes take this courſe: If God be the abſolutely perfect being: his underſtanding is infallible, his power unbounded, his goodneſs inexhauſtible; he judges and treats all according

according to truth; he purpoſes and effects pure good and continually the beſt; he is ſufficient to himſelf and needs nothing without him; he is not worſhipped by men's hands; he can never fail of his object; his object can be no other than perfection and happineſs; all that he does and permits is right and good. What ſolutions ſhall we not diſcover from theſe and the like meditations! Often captivating our ſoul, turning all our faculties into the propereſt channel, tuning them to the nobleſt pitch, and pervading us with ſentiments and emotions the moſt rapturous and ſublime!

And then the relations wherein we ſtand towards the deity, what God is in regard to us, and what we are in regard to him! What important objects of reflection! Here we ſhall meet with fewer difficulties, and diſcover ſtill more light, ſtill more comfort, ſtill more ſources of joy and felicity. Oh what does not this imply, how vaſt, how univerſal its comprehenſion, that God, the Almighty, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, is our creator and preſerver, that he is our ſovereign, our father, our overſeer and judge, and that we are his creatures, his ſubjects, his children! Yes, this idea we ſhould be continually ſtriving to render more perſpicuous, more productive, more important and more applicable to ourſelves!

We ſhould ſometimes thus employ our thoughts: Is God my creator, my preſerver, am I his creature:

then I am not the production of blind chance, not a being left to himſelf and his own weakneſs and folly; then I am the work of ſupreme wiſdom and benignity; then I am and ſubſiſt entirely by God; then it is his power that operates in me and through me; then I am an inſtrument in his hands; then I execute his will, his beheſts in this province of his domain; then I promote wittingly and unwittingly his higher aims. And what a worth muſt this confer upon all that I here undertake and achieve! And how carefully, how willingly, how cheerfully am I incited hereby to undertake and accompliſh whatever God has commiſſioned me to perform! With what a reſpect ſhould it inſpire me both for my body and my ſoul, and how impreſſively caution me againſt every abuſe of my faculties!

Is God my ſovereign, am I his ſubject: how holy ſhould all his laws, how venerable all his ordinances and diſpenſations be to me! What ſubmiſſion, what zeal in obedience, what calm content ſhould this thought beget in me at all times: the Lord has done or decreed it, the Lord has commanded it, it is agreeable to the will and the purpoſes of the Lord!

Is God my father, am I his child: what may, what ſhould I not expect from him! What protection, what aſſiſtance, what parental tenderneſs may I not promiſe myſelf to receive at his hands! How ſecurely may I truſt to his guidance and direction!

rection! How infallibly aſſured may I be that he has deſigned me for happineſs and will lead me to it!

Is God, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, my overſeer and my judge: how righteouſly, how equitably will he judge and reward me! How tranquil may I be amid the reproaches and ingratitude of the world, when I feel that I am doing right and diſcharging my duty! How amply am I repaid for every good action performed in ſecret, ſeen and approved as it is by the Omniſcient! And how wiſe, how good, how delighted muſt I be, if I never loſe ſight of the relations in which I ſtand towards God, and thus think and act conſiſtently with them!

In like manner ſhould we frequently reflect upon the will of God, upon his laws, and upon the reaſons, the objects of them, that we may learn to revere them as juſt and equitable, as ſalutary and beneficial, and to obey them from principle and with pleaſure. If at the ſame time we conſult our own nature and appointment, our capacities and powers; if we conſult the nature, the qualities and combinations of extraneous objects; if we conſult the ſcriptures as the ſafeſt vehicle of information, and reflect upon all this together: we ſhall learn from it, what in the moral as in the phyſical world is truth, order, perfection, happineſs, what harmonizes with the deſigns of God or militates againſt them; what is honourable or diſgraceful to his rational creatures, degrades or exalts them, what carries them forward

to

to their proper appointment or puſhes them from it, what more capacitates or incapacitates them for communion and fellowſhip with the ſupreme being. Thus will our reflections upon God be at the ſame time reflections upon religion, which connects us with the deity, informs us of his diſpoſitions towards us, and inſpires us with ſuch diſpoſitions towards him as ſuit our relations to the author and preſerver of our lives. Thus ſhall we learn by reflection, to blend religion with all things, and ſhall alleviate to us every trouble, render whatever is pleaſant ſtill more pleaſing; and all important concerns ſtill more important. We ſhall learn to be, to do, to enjoy, to ſuffer, to fear, to hope all things in reference to God and faith in him; to combine moſt diverſely and intimately theſe ideas with all others; and thus will the whole tenour of our life be one continued office of divine worſhip, and religion our inſeparable companion, guide, comforter, counſellor along its dubious paths.

SERMON IX.

Reflections on Chriſt and Chriſtianity, on Virtue and Vice, on the Worth of Objects, on Happineſs and Miſery, on the moral Quality of our Heart and Life, on Mortality and Immortality.

GOD, thy throne is effulgent with pure, unclouded light, but to our ſight clouds and thick darkneſs are round about thee: thy neceſſary and immutable nature is inſcrutable; thy glorious attributes preſent to our view an abyſs, in which all our capacities are loſt. In profoundeſt humility we adore thee, the Incomprehenſible, and awfully admire thy majeſty and grandeur, which ſurpaſs our conceptions. — But immenſe as is the diſtance between thee, the Eternal and Infinite, and us frail tenants of the duſt, yet thou haſt revealed to us as much of thyſelf and thy decrees, as is ſuitable to our preſent ſtate and needful to our compoſure and happineſs. All nature bears witneſs to the perfection of its author and father; all creatures proclaim thy ſovereignty; the univerſe is full of thy glory.

glory. Everywhere we are encompaſſed by the cleareſt proofs of thy unbounded, all compriſing intellect, thy conſummate power, thy tenderneſs and love. — And how much, o God, have thy holy revelations enlarged the borders of our knowledge! What light, what comfort, what incentive to good, what hope and aſſurance haſt thou not granted us therein! We now know thee with authentic certainty, as he who is eſſential love, who grants forgiveneſs to the failing and erroneous and mercy to the wretched; we know thee as a God, who pardons ſins, and ſhews the tenderneſs of a father to thoſe that fear him with a childlike awe. Now we know the path of communication with thee and to bliſsful immortality. — God, what obligations we are under from all thoſe perceptions to worſhip thee with the moſt profound humility, to love thee above all things, and to render the moſt prompt and joyful obedience to all thy laws! What criminal ingratitude ſhould we be guilty of, in not following the ſhining light which thou haſt vouchſafed us; in not worthily employing the advantages which we poſſeſs over ſuch numbers of mankind, in forgetting thee, our benefactor and father, and refuſing thee due homage and obedience! Preſerve us, o God of all mercy, from this ſcandalous and criminal conduct. Grant, that our hearts and our behaviour may always accord with the confeſſion of our mouths and with the perceptions of our underſtanding, and that the courſe of our lives may be more virtuous and holy,

holy, the better we are acquainted with thee and thy deſigns, our preſent and future deſtination. Bleſs to that end the miniſtration of thy word to which we are now proceeding, and let it be acceptable to thee, through Jeſus Chriſt, our lord, in whoſe name and words we farther addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

I THESS. V. 21.

Prove all things; hold faſt that which is good.

CHRIST and chriſtianity form a third object of our reflection, which is every way worthy of it. And how much here has the reflecting man to conſider, and how can he poſſibly aſſert his title to be a rational chriſtian, who does not frequently reflect upon it!

What is chriſtianity? Who is the founder of it? In what relations do I ſtand towards him? What is he to me? What am I to him? Wherein does chriſtianity properly conſiſt? What is its end and aim? What is the true ſpirit of it? What has it done in the world, what effect has it had on me? On what arguments does its divine authority reſt? What makes it reſpectable and amiable in the eyes of the intelligent and well diſpoſed man, the ſincere friend of truth and virtue? What are its doctrines, its precepts, its promiſes, its felicities? With what ſentiments

ſentiments does it inſpire its genuine confeſſors? What proſpects does it open to them? — Queſtions how momentous!

We ſhould therefore, my dear hearers, frequently enter upon theſe or ſimilar meditations: Has there ever lived upon earth a man who excelled Jeſus in wiſdom, in virtue, in charity, in magnanimity, in zeal for human happineſs, or equalled him? Has the life of any man ever been ſo harmleſs, ſo holy, ſo beneficial as his life? Did ever any philanthropiſt ſacrifice himſelf ſo voluntarily, ſo deliberately, in a way ſo remote from all fanaticiſm and vanity, for his brethren, as he did? Has there ever been a hiſtory related by more credible witneſſes in a more credible manner, and confirmed by ſtronger proofs, than the hiſtory of his life, of his ſufferings, and his reſurrection from the dead? How cogent are my motives then for receiving him as a teacher of truth, as an ambaſſador of God, as the greateſt benefactor to mankind, for confidently truſting myſelf to him and his direction, and, inſtructed by his counſels, attracted by his example, invigorated by his conſolations, animated by the glorious proſpects to which he would exalt my views, for purſuing after perfection and happineſs along the road which he has gone before me! And in all theſe qualities what gratitude, what love, what ſubmiſſion, what obedience do I not owe him! Can I do leſs than regulate my life by his will, ſince he died for me and for my brethren!

And

And where was there ever a purer, holier doctrine, more worthy both of God and man, than his? What darkneſs, what fearful doubts has it not diſpelled! What light, what intellectual life, what energy to good, what hopes, what aſſurance has it not diffuſed among mankind, and even ſhed into my mind and into my heart! What totally different, how much juſter ideas does it communicate to us of God, of our deſtination, of the preſent and the future! What ſpiritual wants does it leave unſupplied! With what generous ſentiments does it not inſpire mankind! To what good, great exploits does it not excite them! How high it raiſes them above things temporal and viſible! Is not the real chriſtian the wiſeſt and beſt among the wiſe and good, and among the happy the happieſt? How ſafe are the rules of his conduct! How firm the foundation of his hopes! Steadily looking unto God and Jeſus, how joyous he may be even now in his life, and how aſſuredly expect the brighter glories of a ſuperior, a better life after death! To him every duty is a delight, every affliction a boon, every pleaſure a pledge of ſtill greater and purer ſatisfactions, and every ſtep he makes brings him nearer to the prize of perfection.

Yes, to this doctrine will I adhere, by its precepts will I regulate my conduct, to its temper I will conform my own, I will ſubmit to be animated and governed by its ſpirit, rely upon its promiſes, and follow its venerable founder, the grand exemplar of

human

human virtue. It juſtly claims in all reſpects my full aſſent, my faith, my obedience; it is the ſtraiteſt, ſureſt way to happineſs. To me therefore chriſtianity ſhall not be a barren ſpeculation, not a ſimple theory, not an outward badge of diſtinction, ſtill leſs an occaſion of controverſy with my brethren and of ſeparation from them: to me it ſhall be a rule of life and a vital principle, it ſhall inform and guide me, illuſtrate my vocation, and aſſiſt me the more ſurely and completely to attain the true end of my being.

Likewiſe upon virtue and vice and their ſeveral conſequences, as the primary ſources of our perfection and our imperfection, our happineſs and our miſery, we ſhould frequently reflect; comparing them together, diſcriminating their ordinary and natural and their caſual effects, their outward aſpect and their inward frame, and balancing them fairly againſt each other.

On theſe occaſions we ſhould ſay to ourſelves: Which of the two is more beautiful, better, more agreeable to my nature and deſtination, falſehood or truth, order or confuſion, unruffled ſerenity or perturbation, ſecurity or danger? And are not the former the fruits of virtue, and the latter the conſequences of vice? What can be an equivalent to me for the want of virtue, or ſhield me from the natural penalties of vice? Can riches, can rank and ſtation, can power and authority render me truly honourable in the ſight of God and of rational, impartial judges, can they afford me any real ſatisfaction and felicity, if

if I be not virtuous? Can poverty, can meanneſs and obſcurity actually diſgrace me, or make me thoroughly wretched, if virtue be the companion of my indigence and my low and apparently deſpicable ſituation? Does not all at laſt depend on inward ſpiritual perfection, the quality of my ſentiments and affections, of my heart and my conduct? May not virtue reaſonably look for the reſpect and eſteem of all wiſe and good people, the approbation of all ſuperior intelligences, the complacency of the ſupreme being? Has not vice to expect degradation and infamy ſooner or later from God and man?

And how different is my ſtate of mind, my condition, according as I do good or ill, think and act virtuouſly or viciouſly! Am I not in the former caſe eaſy, cheerful, ſatisfied? And in the other uneaſy, dejected, diſſatisfied with myſelf and all about me? Is not virtue attended with a quiet conſcience, and vice with tormenting reproaches; the former with courage and confidence, and the latter with puſillanimity and fear? How ſoothing, how refreſhing to me in the one inſtance is the ſentiment of God, and his ſuperintendance over all, the thought of judgment and futurity: and how greatly in the other inſtance will theſe ideas alarm and confound me!

How even, how luminous, how ſafe is the path of virtue, even when it is toilſome and not entirely free from obſtructions! And how tortuous, how dreary, how dark and dangerous is the way of vice, though

ever ſo ſmooth and trodden! Can I love myſelf, and yet not purſue the former path? Can I take the latter way, without acting inimically to myſelf? And even though that path were much more toilſome and inconvenient, and this way much more ſmooth and pleaſant than they really are, how different is their termination! The former, the path of virtue, leads to honour, to glory, to life, to happineſs: the latter, the way of vice, to infamy, to death, to miſery. And how ſhort is the career of life! How quickly is it run through! Preſently finiſhed is that generous toil, with which the virtuous man contends for the glorious prize; and extremely fleeting, momentary is the fallacious, debaſing pleaſure that plunges the libertine in ruin. No, the ſuperficial charms of vice ſhall not impoſe on me: the grave outſide, the ſober, modeſt, often baſhful mien of virtue ſhall not deter me from being her votary and engaging in her ſervice. No, ſin is the deſtruction of man, to obey it is ſlavery and bondage, its wages are miſery and death: virtue alone is life and liberty, it alone conducts to durable, permanent happineſs. "Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace."

If we reflect in this manner upon virtue and vice and their conſequences, and that frequently and on every particular occaſion when we are to chuſe between the two: how reſpectable will the former become to us, and how odious the latter! What agreeable images will aſſociate with the idea of

virtue,

virtue, and what diſguſting, horrible ſenſations combine with the idea of vice in our mind and in our heart; and how eaſy will it thus become for us to obey every impulſe, every ſummons of the former, and to reſiſt every temptation of the latter! And is not this the direct, ſure road to human happineſs?

A fifth claſs of objects, whereupon we ſhould often reflect, is the worth of things, and particularly thoſe which appertain to our well-being, to the elegances and accommodations of life; the value of health, of beauty, of riches, of honour, of rank and ſtation, of ſenſual pleaſure, of luxury and magnificence, of life itſelf.

The oftener theſe objects preſent themſelves to us; the more they are connected with all that we ſee and hear and do; the more we are employed in the acquiſition, the preſervation, the uſe of them; the greater influence they may have upon our peace and happineſs; the more ſplendid and captivating their outward aſpect frequently is; the more variouſly they are beheld and judged of by different perſons and by the ſame perſon at different times: the more neceſſary it is, that we ſhould learn juſtly to appreciate them, to hold them for what they really are; and this we never ſhall nor can do in the noiſe and tumult of the occupations and amuſements of life, never by the mere view of theſe objects; it can no otherwiſe be learnt but by calm reflection upon them.

We ſhould therefore often recall to memory what we ſee, hear, learn, obſerve concerning them, and then enter upon theſe or the like meditations: Are theſe things entirely that which they appear to be? Have they quite that value, which the generality attribute to them? Do they merit all that eſteem, that affection, that exertion, to which they lay claim? Are they ultimate objects, or rather means to higher ends? Does their value rather depend on their poſſeſſion, or on the worthy uſe that we make of them? Has therefore my health, have my faculties any great value, unleſs I perform ſomewhat good and uſeful by them, unleſs I can give a ſatisfactory account to myſelf of their application, if I am at the ſame time oppreſſed by uneaſineſs, languor, liſtleſsneſs? Are they not only then truly precious to me, when I gladly employ them to the purpoſes for which they are granted me by the creator, when I cheerfully do that which he has commiſſioned me here on earth to do, and thereby purſue the end of my being? Has perſonal beauty any real, laſting worth unleſs it be animated and heightened by the beauties of the mind, by a ſound judgment and an honeſt, virtuous heart; if in conjunction with it there be no more ſpiritual perfection and intrinſic merit than with the beauty of the flower of the field; if like that it entirely fades away, and its abſence is not ſupplied by mature and generous fruits? Have rank and ſtation any real value, if diſgraced by a ſordid temper and conduct, unleſs I be excellent in wiſdom and virtue

and general utility as much as in outward diſtinctions, if I be ſtyled great and noble, and yet neither think nor act greatly and nobly? And is it not juſt the ſame with all other objects of this nature? Am I not far more blithe and ſatisfied, when I have done ſomewhat fair and honourable and am conſcious of it, than when I receive honour and reſpect from others without this inward ſentiment? Far more blitheſome and ſatisfied, if by the worthy application of my property I have promoted the happineſs of others, or leſſened their miſery, than if I conſider myſelf merely as the poſſeſſor of great ſums of gold and count them over ever ſo often? Am I not far more joyous and ſatisfied on feeling myſelf refreſhed and encouraged by the enjoyment of ſome innocent pleaſure of ſenſe, to proſecute the affairs of my calling, to every uſeful work, than if I enjoyed that pleaſure merely, and then ſunk liſtleſs under the aimleſs enjoyment of it? And my life itſelf, what great value could it have, if it were not marked by good actions, if I were forced to conſider that portion of it which is already elapſed as entirely and for ever loſt to me, if I might not hope by it to have capacitated myſelf for a better life? Have not therefore all theſe things far more the nature and quality of means to ſuperior ends, than ends in themſelves? Should I not therefore act fooliſhly were I to convert the means into ends, ſet a higher value on the former and more ſtrenuouſly ſeek after them than the latter, and content myſelf with the ſimple poſſeſſion of that

which can only be profitable to me by the good and worthy uſe I make of it?

And in what relations do thoſe outward things ſtand to my inward ſpiritual perfection? Do they conſtitute a part of myſelf? Are they neceſſary ingredients in my perſonality? Are they unfading and immortal like myſelf? Are they not lent me but for a ſhorter or longer time? May I not loſe them to-day or to-morrow? Muſt I not one day leave them all behind me? Shall or can I carry anything beſides ſpiritual excellencies, excellencies of the mind and heart, into the grave with me and into eternity? Muſt not therefore wiſdom and virtue be of far greater value, than riches and honour and ſtation and rank and all that charms and faſcinates the ſenſual man? Will not thoſe and thoſe alone abide, long after theſe are vaniſhed away?

In what relations laſtly ſtand theſe objects to my happineſs? Are they happineſs? Need we only to have and poſſeſs them, for being happy? Do I not then ſee and know happy perſons, who are neither rich, nor great, nor beautiful, nor powerful? Do I not ſee and know many others, who with all theſe diſtinctions are extremely diſſatisfied and wretched? Thus ſhall we by reiterated, calm reflection on the true nature of things learn to underſtand their worth, and to value them no higher, to love them in no greater degree, to ſeek them with no more earneſtneſs, than they deſerve.

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In the ſame deſign we ſhould frequently reflect in ſilence upon happineſs and miſery. If happineſs be the end and aim of all our wiſhes and endeavours, what can be of greater concernment to us, than to underſtand their real quality and the way that leads to their poſſeſſion? How falſe, how confuſed are however the reigning conceptions of them? And how improbable it is that they ſhould be rectified in the tumult of the world, where whatever glitters and ſhines paſſes for everything! And in what particular are ignorance and error more pernicious than in this?

We ſhould therefore frequently collect our ſcattered thoughts, my devout audience, retire as it were into the receſſes of our ſoul, into our real ſelf, there conſult our feelings and experiences, and aſk ourſelves: When am I moſt contented and happy? And when wretched? Where lie the principal ſources of my happineſs, and of my miſery? Within me, or without me? In what I myſelf am and conceive, or in what I have and what ſurrounds me? Can health, riches, honour, authority, or other outward diſtinctions abſtractedly conſidered make me contented and happy? Have I always been ſo in the poſſeſſion of theſe objects, and are all they ſo who poſſeſs them?

Can I be happy, unleſs peace and order reign in my boſom, unleſs I know and love the truth and follow her precepts, unleſs I adopt fixt and ſound

principles, purſue a fixt, invariable object, and am continually advancing towards it?

Can I be happy, unleſs I have God, the fountain of life, of joy, of felicity, for my patron and friend, unleſs I triumph in his exiſtence, his ſuperintendance, his adminiſtration, his complacency, and may confidently ſurrender myſelf to his care and direction?

Can I be happy, unleſs I can be eaſy and cheerful in converſe with my brethren, and am conſcious that I honeſtly maintain my poſt among them, faithfully diſcharge my duty towards them, and therefore am deſerving of their eſteem and affection?

Can I be happy, unleſs I be able to bear retirement, ſolitude, and there employ and entertain myſelf agreeably and ſatisfactorily? I cannot however live perpetually in noiſe and diſſipation; and never do I enjoy my life with leſs conſciouſneſs than when in ſuch ſcenes. The older I grow, the more I ſhall be left alone and confined to myſelf; and then how much depends on my internal conſtitution, on the ſtate of my mind?

Can I in ſhort be happy, unleſs I expect a better, a ſuperior life after this, and can comfort myſelf with the idea of it in all the troubles and afflictions of the preſent? The thought of death however I cannot always chaſe away, it will ſometimes intrude even when I am moſt elated with joy; and how greatly would it diſturb and embitter my ſatisfactions, if I

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were threatened by futurity with total deſtruction or grievous puniſhment? Can I therefore be happy without wiſdom, without virtue, without religion and piety?

And that miſery on the other hand, at the apprehenſion of which ſuch numbers are appalled, and whereby ſo many are really oppreſſed, wherein does it conſiſt? Can it indeed conſiſt entirely or principally in the privation, in the want of extrinſic endowments and privileges? Are then all thoſe really miſerable, who are not rich, not beautiful, not ſtrong, not great and powerful? Have I not myſelf been deſtitute of ſome of theſe advantages, or am I not ſtill debarred from them, without being miſerable? Or is that real miſery when all does not go according to my wiſhes, when I meet with a variety of croſſes and diſappointments, when I have obſtacles and difficulties to encounter on my journey? Can I then deny, that my wiſhes are ſometimes fooliſh, ſometimes unreaſonable, and that neither my mental nor my corporeal powers could be ſufficiently drawn forth and exerciſed on a perfectly plain road? Are not therefore the ſources of miſery likewiſe more within me, than without me?

Should I not be miſerable, if I were ignorant of what it behoves me moſt to underſtand, or were driven to and fro by anxious doubts? Should I not be miſerable if I were diſſatisfied with myſelf, if I were obliged to reproach myſelf, to ſhun myſelf, and to ſeek for palliatives to my uneaſineſs in riot

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and intoxication? Should I not be miſerable, if I had reaſon to be afraid both of God and man, and to dread the diſpleaſure of the univerſal judge and of the reſentment and revenge of my brethren, becauſe I have acted contrary to my relations towards both the one and the other? Should I not be miſerable if I were a ſlave to vice, if I were ſo ſwayed by any inordinate, evil propenſity and paſſion, that I found myſelf often conſtrained to do what I muſt myſelf acknowledge to be unjuſt and criminal? Should I not be miſerable, if I had no firm ground of hope and aſſurance, if I knew not on what to lay hold in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death, how I might baniſh every diſturbing thought, every anxious care, whereon I might rely in full ſecurity, whence obtain a ſettled tranquillity within my boſom, what I had to fear, or what to expect?

Are not therefore happineſs and miſery far more dependent on my inward moral conſtitution, on my temper and ſentiments, on the tenour of my conduct, than on my outward ſituation? Are not they far more in my own power, than all that is without me? Can I therefore more promote my happineſs, than by ſtriving after wiſdom and virtue and the good pleaſure of God with unceaſing ardour? Can I more ſurely eſcape miſery, than by carefully guarding myſelf againſt follies, ſins and vices?

And when we thus reflect on happineſs and miſery, we ought to bring theſe reflections home, and apply them properly, by propoſing theſe queſtions to ourſelves:

ſelves: Am I particularly happy or miſerable? And how far and in what reſpects? Might I not perhaps be ſtill happier? And how muſt I ſet about it in order to become ſo? What muſt I in this reſpect avoid? What muſt I do? What ſay reaſon and experience, what does religion teach me on this head? How am I to acquire a completer command of myſelf, a greater independence on extrinſic objects, a nearer fellowſhip with God?

This leads us to another claſs of objects, on which we ſhould ſometimes reflect, and which are highly deſerving of our moſt ſerious reflection. It is the moral quality of our heart and life.

What rich and ſolid matter for reflection! What great attention and integrity is here required to ſearch out the truth, to ſearch it thoroughly out! How deceitful is the heart of man, how apt he is to be partial in judging of his conduct! And yet how intimately, how inſeparably are the ſtate and regulation of both connected with our happineſs! What ſhould be of greater moment to us than to know whether our heart and our conduct be morally good or bad, whether they be pleaſing or diſpleaſing to God, whether they open to us gladdening or terrific proſpects in that futurity which we are approaching with haſty ſteps?

Accordingly it will not ſuffice, to caſt at times, by the way as it were, ſome tranſient glances on what we are doing and what is paſſing within us, but we muſt reflect upon it frequently, expreſsly and with intenſe

intenſe application of mind. On theſe occaſions we muſt aſk ourſelves: How fares it with my knowledge, with my faith, with my virtue, with my piety? To what degree of perfection have I attained in theſe ſeveral reſpects, or not attained? How eaſy or how difficult, how familiar or how unwelcome to me are the occupations, the exerciſes, the actions, that belong or relate to them? How and from what motives do I acquit myſelf of my duty? What ſentiments and affections are predominant in my heart? What maxims ſway me moſt, and moſt frequently determine me in my choice? What ends do I purſue the moſt ſteadily and eagerly? What temptations are moſt dangerous to me? What circumſtances, what occupations, what companies, what amuſements are the moſt favourable or unfavourable to my virtue and piety?

Am I really free from all vices? Do I never ſin deſignedly, wittingly and wilfully; and do I immediately endeavour as much as poſſible to repair the miſtakes I commit on being aware of them? Am I actuated by a vivifying principle always inclining me to whatever is true and right and good and agreeable to the will of my ſupreme ruler and lawgiver? Do I directly and gladly what I acknowledge to be right and good, or with reluctance and from conſtraint? Do truth and harmony prevail in whatever I conceive and ſay and do? Am I conſiſtent with myſelf at all times, in all circumſtances, in all the occupations of my life?

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As a votary of God and Jeſus, do I look unto God and Jeſus in all things? Is the will of my father in heaven, is the example of my lord and ſaviour continually before my eyes? Do I make it my conſtant endeavour to accompliſh that will with ever increaſing fidelity and delight, and continually more completely to imitate this example? Am I never weary in doing juſtice and ſhewing mercy? Do I never reſt ſatisfied with that ſtage of wiſdom, of virtue, of piety, which I have already reached? Do I actually and with unabated ardour ſtrive after that perfection, of which I am capable as a man and a chriſtian? Have I in one or another period of my life advanced towards it or receded from it?

How can, how muſt I therefore conſider and judge of myſelf and my condition? With heartfelt ſatisfaction? Or with anxiety and alarm? With ſatisfaction at my proficiency in good, or with conſternation at my continued infirmities and my frequent relapſes into ſin? What can I juſtly declare myſelf to be in the preſence of God and man? A wiſe man, or a fool? A ſervant of vice, or a friend of virtue? A dutiful ſubject of God, or a rebel in his kingdom? A mere liſtleſs profeſſor, or a ſincere follower of Jeſus? A man of this world, or a citizen and inheritor of heaven?

The oftener, my dear friends, the more impartially we ſhall thus reflect upon our moral ſtate, upon the ſentiments of our hearts and the frame of our conduct; the leſs we loſe ſight both of the one and the other:

other: the more juſtly ſhall we learn to know and to judge of ourſelves; the leſs will our defects, our failings, our infirmities be hidden from our view; the eaſier will it be for us to repair theſe defects, to avoid theſe failings, to correct theſe infirmities, and ſo proceed from one degree of perfection to another. And though at preſent theſe reflections ſhould awaken in our minds more diſagreeable than agreeable ideas, becauſe we diſcover more evil than good in our breaſts: what peace and ſatisfaction will ſooner or later be the conſequence, if thus we attain to the knowledge of ourſelves and by means of that to a ſenſible improvement in heart and life!

To be brief, our mortality and our immortality and the connection of the preſent with the future afford a no leſs important than productive ſubject of reflection.

I am well aware, that man naturally ſhudders at the thoughts of death. But at thoughts of death, that are connected with views of immortality and everlaſting life, the chriſtian needs not, ſhould not ſhudder; theſe he may purſue with ſober ſatisfaction; theſe will even excite in him confidence and joy.

Frequently therefore ſhould we enter upon theſe or the like meditations: That I am mortal, this I know, this I feel; of this I am ſufficiently admoniſhed by the dilapidations and decays of my terreſtrial nature which I have already experienced, the ſickneſſes and pains, which I have already felt; this is loudly proclaimed in my ears by all-ſurrounding

ing objects. How many of my friends, of my acquaintance are already departed, and gone to the grave before me! How many, who were much younger, much healthier and ſtronger than myſelf! What is the whole earth whereon I dwell and walk, but one vaſt yawning grave, receiving into its boſom one generation of mortals after another, where their duſt is mingled and metamorphoſed ten thouſand different ways? Yes, my body too is of the duſt, and will quickly turn to duſt again. Though flouriſhing now ſo fair, ſoon will it fade like the flower of the field and fall a prey to corruption. And this to-morrow, it may even to-day be its lot. My courſe on earth is ſhort; and it may ſtill farther be abridged by numberleſs caſualties which I can neither foreſee nor prevent. A tranſient dream is the longeſt life of man, and ſeldom is he able to dream it entirely out. Suddenly ſnaps the thread of his ideas, and his deſtiny ſeems to be total ceſſation and deſtruction. No, here I am not at home, only a pilgrim, a ſtranger; and all that I here have and poſſeſs, is not my own property, but a loan, a truſt committed to me. To-day it is in my keeping, to-morrow in the hands of another. To-day I have perhaps the command over numbers: to-morrow they trample my aſhes under foot. To-day I can perhaps operate extenſively around me: to-morrow I am out of all correſpondence with the viſible world.

And

And I ſhall be proud of what I am and have and do? I ſhall lord it over others, and forget that my origin was the ſame as their's, and my end will be like their end? I ſhall attach my heart to objects that are ſo frail and tranſitory? I ſhall anxiouſly diſquiet myſelf in acquiring poſſeſſions, that are ſo precarious and which I muſt ſo ſoon and for ever quit? I ſhall bewail the loſs or the defect of theſe goods, as though they were my indefeaſible property, as though they were a part of myſelf? I ſhall ſeek my chief, my entire felicity here, where all is ſubject to declenſion and death? No, in all theſe reſpects I will ſo think and act, and ſo regard and uſe the things of this world as behoves a frail and mortal man.

But well for me, that I am not entirely mortal, that my ſpirit will live for ever, for ever triumph in exiſtence! Yes, this I am aſſured of by all that I know and obſerve concerning God, his relations and diſpoſitions towards mankind, his regulations and inſtitutions both in the natural and the moral world. This I learn from the grand outlines of extenſive plans diſcernible in my nature, from the great preparatory endowments and capacities and energies, which I feel within me; the exerciſes and duties, that are here preſcribed me; the events that befall myſelf and others; the progreſs to perfection, to which all things tend, and for which all are ſtriving; and the correſpondence which I am already capable of

of having and maintaining with the ſupreme being. Of this in ſhort I am aſſured by the goſpel, the credibility whereof reſts on ſo many ſolid arguments, and which places our deſtination to life and to immortality beyond all doubt.

And how ſtrong a light does this view throw upon all that I am and all that betides me! How more important now are all things to me! How tolerable, how eaſy every affliction! How inconſiderable the privation of outward objects! How much more refreſhing every pleaſure! How much more eſtimable every fellow-creature, deſigned with me for immortality, and everlaſtingly, though in other relations and connections, to live with me! And ought not this to refine and elevate my ſentiments and affections? Should it ever ſuffer my ardour in good to abate, or allow me to be faint and weary in ſtriving after higher perfection?

How accurately is the preſent conjoined to the future! Is not all that I here conceive and do, and whatever befalls me attended with infinite conſequences? Here I am to ſow; there to reap. Here to work and bear and ſuffer; and there to receive the wages of my work, and of my patient, godly ſufferings. Here is more of preparation and qualification; there more of enjoyment. This is the age of diſcipline and trial; that the time of recompence. And ſhall I confine my view to the preſent moment? Chuſe and ſeek and do that alone which procures me ſome preſent pleaſure or advantage?

Ought I not now to be laying a firm and ſure foundation for my future happineſs? No, I will think and act agreeably to my ſuperior appointment, like an immortal, conſider and judge of preſent things as they are connected with the future, gladly renounce and neglect whatever would bring me loſs and detriment hereafter, willingly and cheerfully do whatever promiſes me honour and advantage then, and not attend ſo much to the viſible, which is temporal, as to the inviſible which is for ever abiding.

Theſe are the principal objects of rational chriſtian reflection. So many inexhauſtible ſources of truth, of wiſdom, of felicity! Materials of thought for all ages, for all eternity! To draw frequently and copiouſly from theſe ſources, to work up theſe materials with ever increaſing care, and thence to acquire intellectual riches, which, differently from worldly lucre, always increaſe by uſe, are always more captivating and ſatisfying by enjoyment: be that our moſt momentous and darling occupation!

SERMON X.

The Obſtacles and Aſſiſtances to Reflection.

GOD, were we to compare the means and abilities, which thou haſt vouchſafed us for the advancement of our perfection and happineſs, with the uſe that we make of them, how confounding would the compariſon be to many of us! How rarely do we employ thoſe means and abilities to the ends for which thou haſt granted them! How frequently does it happen that we are far from being what we might and ſhould be! On what inferior ſteps of intellectual and chriſtian perfection do we uſually remain! Ah, one while it is levity, at another indolence and ſloth, now ſenſual luſts, then other vile paſſions that cauſe us to loſe ſight of our moſt important intereſts, render us careleſs towards them, and lead us to think and act as though we were not rational creatures, capable of conſideration and reflection, were not men and chriſtians deſigned for immortality and for ſtriving after increaſing participation of thy divine nature, by means of a progreſſive improvement in intellect and virtue! And then we complain of the tyrannical ſway of ſenſuality, of the want of abilities for the performance of our

duty, of the want of satisfaction and happiness; complain therefore of difficulties, which we ourselves have made, of defects, which are imputable solely to our own perverseness! Oh might we once cease from living in this perpetual dissension and enmity with ourselves, and at the very time that we are wishing to become better and happier, always farther receding from that celestial object! Oh might we at length learn to think and act on juster and firmer principles, and thus establish order and harmony in our hearts and lives! Bless then, most gracious father, bless to the furtherance of these views, the meditations which are now to employ us. Teach us to understand our errors and our transgressions, help us to avoid them, enable us thus to become more apt and expert in sedate reflection, and from the practice of it to be constantly increasing in wisdom and virtue. These our petitions we offer up at the footstool of thy mercy-seat in the name of Jesus Christ, our lord; and address thee farther as he in compassion to our infirmities taught us: Our father, &c.

LUKE ii. 19.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

ONE would think, my pious hearers, that nothing should be more easy and natural to man, than reflection upon important moral objects, deficient as he

he is neither in capacities nor powers, nor in various motives and occaſions for it. In thinking he is perpetually occupied, voluntarily and involuntarily; and how eaſy, how natural ſeems the gradation from thought to reflection, or to the conſideration of what he has thought! Who is not prone in other reſpects to conſider, to contemplate his diſtinctions, his wealth, his agreeable views and expectations! And yet this reflection is by no means common among mankind. To ſome it is a practice abſolutely ſtrange and unknown; with ſome it is an occupation extremely rare; ſome are even afraid of it, as a ſource of grief and vexation. Others again complain of it, as a laborious, troubleſome buſineſs, which they have often attempted in vain, and which they can never properly ſucceed in. Rational, ſerious reflection, and eſpecially reflection upon moral and religious ſubjects may certainly have on one hand its impediments and difficulties, as well as on the other there may be means of facilitating it. And this is in fact the ſtate of the caſe, my pious hearers. Natural and eaſy as the thing is in itſelf; yet a man not unfrequently renders it difficult by his erroneous mode of proceeding. He firſt throws rubbiſh and ſtumbling-blocks of various kinds in his way, and afterwards laments the toilſomeneſs of the road, and makes that his excuſe if he leaves it and gets into devious turnings and intricacies. He firſt weakens and enervates himſelf, and then murmurs and complains that he is ſo weak and nerveleſs. Juſt ſo does

he act in regard to reflection. Let us avoid theſe faults, my pious hearers, and endeavour to facilitate to ourſelves this noble occupation, and to acquaint and familiarize ourſelves with it, as much as ever we can. In furtherance of this purpoſe by my preſent diſcourſe, I ſhall do two things. I ſhall firſt point out to you the impediments to reflection, and admoniſh you of them; and afterwards furniſh you with a few means, whereby it may be greatly facilitated.

The firſt impediment to reflection, or the firſt cauſe why it is ſo inconvenient and appears ſuch an arduous taſk to numbers of people, lies in the erroneous education of the generality of mankind. Are proper pains always taken to lead the minds of children and young people to reflection, and to aſſiſt them in it? Is not rather, in general, every art employed to reſtrain them from it, and to ſtifle in them all capacity and inclination for it? It is the memory of the child alone that is uſually employed, he is made to rehearſe and repeat by rote the ideas and thoughts of others, confined ſervilely to them, allowed not the leaſt departure from them, and is even chid for any remarks he may happen to make upon them; remarks which, however childiſh, are always the precious ſhoots of opening reflection. Having thus thoughtleſsly run through the childiſh and boyiſh age; being ſo little acquainted with himſelf and ſo inattentive to his mental faculties: how great the danger of his yielding afterwards to his

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ſlothful propenſity, and ſufficing himſelf merely with the purloined or borrowed thoughts which he never properly appropriates by reflection! — Let this remind you of your office and your duty, all ye, who are employed in the inſtruction and education of children and youth. It is your buſineſs not only to inſtil into them certain branches of knowledge, but to teach them by degrees to think for themſelves and to walk without a guide the paths of truth. One thought, however puerile, that expands itſelf in their mind, and which they ſee as it were ſpring up and ſhoot forth, is of more value than a thouſand others, which they merely imprint on their memory. Endeavour therefore to render this proceſs as eaſy to them as poſſible. Think familiarly with them now on this, now on that ſubject that is ſuited to their capacity, and in ſo doing follow rather the march of their own ideas, though it ſhould not be preciſely the direct and proper one, than force them to obſerve the methodical train of yours. Foſter every bloſſom, every fruit, of their reflection, however immature, with the utmoſt care, not for the ſake of oſtentation, — that would be to poiſon both flower and fruit, — but for the ſake of cultivating the ſoil in which it grows, and thus of rearing from it ſtill fairer flowers and riper fruits. Contemn and reject therefore no remarks, no objections, no doubts, that actually proceed from themſelves, and are proofs of their own cogitation. Rather ſeize and employ theſe opportunities to ſhew them

how they may think again upon what they have thought, view the ſubject on ſeveral ſides, in other combinations, and thus remove the difficulties they may ſtumble upon, or make them eaſy about them. Particularly accuſtom them betimes to make obſervations on themſelves and on what is moral in their ſentiments and actions, and frequently to take themſelves to taſk upon it; and never forget that ye contribute far more to the formation of their mind, by thus leading and habituating them to reflection, than without this by infuſing into them ever ſo many branches of literature and ſcience.

A ſecond impediment to reflection, or a ſecond cauſe why it appears ſo troubleſome to many people, is the want of practice in it. We muſt frequently and variouſly employ our mental as well as our corporeal faculties, if we would uſe and apply them with facility and ſucceſs. He that but ſeldom moves any one member of his body, will not be able to put it in motion without trouble, and even then, when he has done ſo, will execute but little with it. He who but rarely exerts and exerciſes any one faculty of his mind, will not be able to exert it without pains and effort. He who ſpends the greater part of his life in vagrancy or drowzineſs of mind, muſt certainly find it troubleſome to bethink himſelf, to come thoroughly to himſelf, and with continued attention to reflect upon what he is and does, what he ſees and hears. Is it expedient then for you to render reflection eaſy and agreeable; uſe frequent exerciſe

exercise in it, be not alarmed at the pains it may cost, oppose a firm resolution and repeated attempts to the difficulties you at first may meet with. Soon will you do with facility and pleasure what now costs you troublesome efforts. When therefore you would reflect upon some particular subject, and the whole of the matter does not present itself immediately, and you can discern and observe but little or nothing of it, let not this by any means deter you from it. Only consider the subject with the more continued attention. The longer we fix our eyes on any object, though at a tolerably great distance, the more it separates from the mass of surrounding objects, the more it evolves its shape, its dimensions, its quality, the more clearly do we distinguish and know it at last. So it is with the understanding, with the eyes of the mind. The longer we fix them on a certain object, which at first lay shrouded from us in absolute darkness, the more sure we are gradually to penetrate that darkness, the more light is gradually diffused upon the object, we distinguish and observe the more particulars in it, and at last that stands in full lustre before us, of which at first we scarcely descried a faint gleam.

A third impediment to reflection, or a third cause, why it is so inconvenient, and seems so troublesome to many people, is a dissipated manner of life. Reflection is a serious business, irreconcilable with the levity of the man of pleasure. He who devotes all, or the greater part of the vacancy left him by the affairs

affairs of his calling, to diſſipation, never comes properly to himſelf, is never duly attentive to himſelf and his moſt important concerns, thinks and lives and exiſts always only without him, but not within him, knows everything better than himſelf, is occupied with everything rather than with himſelf, takes greater intereſt in everything than in what relates to his morality, his intrinſic perfection, his ſuperior deſtination in futurity. Driven to and fro in the eddies of idle diſtractions, one conception joſtles out another, one thought another, the ideas ariſe and vaniſh as ſuddenly as the outward objects that tranſiently give them birth and diſappear; but nothing ſettles in the mind, nothing excites its utmoſt attention, nothing is examined, nothing illuſtrated by diſcuſſion, nothing contemplated on all ſides and leaſt of all on the moral ſide, nothing ſeriouſly and impartially applied to ſelf. The greater the facility and rapidity with which we glide over the ſurface of things; the more impetuous and ungovernable the torrent by which we are hurried along: the more completely we imagine we have reached our aim. The cogitation of ſuch perſons is a game of croſs purpoſes, governed by chance or ariſing mechanically. Be upon your guard againſt this too common fault, my pious hearers, if ye would learn to reflect as rational creatures, as chriſtians, and experience the uſefulneſs and felicity of that reflection. Frequently call your thoughts to counſel. Think not that it is honourable in man or has a tendency

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to promote his real happineſs, to avoid himſelf, to ſhun retirement, and to conſume his life on earth, which is ſo ſhort and deſigned for purpoſes ſo important, in the din of riot and idle loquacity. Apply at leaſt ſome part of your leiſure to quiet converſe with yourſelf, to ſerious meditation on thoſe ſubjects which ſhould be awful and ſacred to a rational, immortal being. And if theſe occupations ſhould at the commencement ſeem troubleſome and inconvenient, always remember, that time is flitting by on rapid pinions, that theſe meditations will obtrude themſelves upon you againſt your inclination, and only become the more painful to you the longer you defer them.

A fourth impediment to reflection, a fourth cauſe why it is ſo inconvenient and appears ſo troubleſome to many perſons, is the confuſion that reigns in their breaſt, the inordinate, turbulent paſſions, by which they are driven to and fro. To reflection it is neceſſary that all ſhould be ſtill within, as well as, nay more than without. The man's mind muſt be free, and his attention muſt be at his command, if he would practiſe it with ſucceſs. And this cannot be the caſe when he is under the influence of paſſion. He then beholds and judges of nothing as it really is; everything then is ſeen by him only on one ſide, only on that which flatters his paſſions, or encourages and inflames them; then nothing but confuſion and diſorder reign in his thoughts as well as his ſenſations; he then breaks the thread of theſe diſagreeable,

greeable, tormenting ideas as ſoon as he can, and ſeeks again to evade them in the tumult of diſſipation. Indeed this reflection, ſedate, continued reflection upon ourſelves and our appointment, upon God and religion, upon mortality and immortality, is the beſt, the only ſure means of pacifying and compoſing our hearts, and of conquering our paſſions. But in order that reflection ſhould be able to effect this, that it may act ſo powerfully upon us, it ſhould not be a ſtranger to us, we muſt have been previouſly trained to it. If we would have it to produce this effect upon us, my pious hearers, apply the ſtilleſt, calmeſt hours of life to this noble, bliſsful occupation; the hours when your paſſions are mute, and the avenues of your heart are open to the voice of truth and the ſuggeſtions of conſcience; the hours when you are maſter of your attention, and can unmoleſtedly and with perfect conſciouſneſs employ your mental powers. No nobler uſe can ye ever make of theſe hours of ſtillneſs and freedom; and if ye waſte them in follies and diſſipations, I know not what will correct you and conduct you to peace and to happineſs. Delay not then theſe exerciſes, till all within you is hoſtility and uproar, till your reaſon is depoſed from its ſway and your heart is become a theatre of tumult and confuſion; but engage in it frequently and gladly in happier circumſtances, and arm yourſelves with it againſt the inroads of paſſion. Eſpecially have recourſe to theſe means of compoſure, immediately as ye per-

ceive that the order and ſerenity of your breaſt is diſturbed, that diſſenſion and ſtrife have ariſen between your thoughts and ſenſations, that affections and appetites are ſtirring within you, that may eaſily degenerate into paſſions; then flee without delay into retirement, and there by ſerious reflection re-eſtabliſh that order and ſerenity ere it be totally ſubverted and loſt.

A fifth impediment to reflection, a fifth cauſe which deters ſo many perſons from it and renders it burdenſome to them, is the conſciouſneſs of their follies and tranſgreſſions, of their vices and ſins, and a dread of the reproaches and ſtings of conſcience, which would be an infallible conſequence of their ſerious reflections. No man, whoſe ruling diſpoſitions are bad, no one addicted to vice, who is not at the ſame time dead to every moral feeling, can ſtand the teſt of reflection, and of tranquil, ſerious converſe with himſelf; and for that reaſon ſo many are afraid of this reflection and of this inward converſation. Like ſome unlucky tradeſman, whoſe buſineſs and circumſtances are fallen into declenſion and ruin, they dare not venture upon a thorough inveſtigation, for fear of the diſgraceful and lamentable diſcoveries, to which it would infallibly lead. Rather will they impoſe on themſelves and others as long as they can, and expoſe themſelves to the conſequences of this deluſion, however fatal, than ſtudy to acquire a knowledge of themſelves and the true ſtate of their affairs, and ſubmit to the humiliation and confuſion

confuſion that would follow upon it. In this predicament is the unjuſt, the ſelf-intereſted, the covetous, the ambitious, the unchaſte, the envious, the vain, every vicious man. He dreads to behold himſelf as he really is, and he has ſtrong forebodings that he cannot avoid it in calm, continued reflection. In thoughtleſs, jovial company, where all is viewed on the ridiculous ſide, and religion and virtue are turned into a jeſt, there to avow a familiarity with ſome, perhaps groſſer, failings, even to boaſt of particular ſins and vices, coſts the vicious man little or nothing, it prevents him not from ſtill fancying himſelf to be much better than he really is, and ſoothing himſelf in the fond conceit. But would he talk in this manner to himſelf in the ſtillneſs of ſolitude, in the ſolemn hours of retirement, avow the ſame things to himſelf in the ſober light of reaſon and religion, if he would there diſcloſe the receſſes of his heart before him, and perceive and feel the reality of what he ſays and is, with all its conſequences, the ſentiment of his native dignity immediately wakes within him, he recoils with horror at himſelf, the intellectual eye turns offended from the hideous ſight, he abhors his inward deformity, and ſeeks his ſalvation in noiſe and riot. Yes, folly and ſin are the ſworn enemies of reflection, as wiſdom and virtue are its cordial friends. Calm, ſedate reflection is in ſome ſort the birthright of the wiſe and virtuous man. He alone is truly capable of it, and he alone has the reliſh of the felicity it yields in its utmoſt extent. Would ye

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ſhare it with him, my pious hearers, follow after wiſdom and virtue; be not deterred by the firſt bitter fruits of this kind of reflection; call up courage enough to contemplate yourſelves in all your nakedneſs and depravity, have the fortitude to pronounce the ſentence of condemnation on yourſelves, and to recogniſe yourſelves for what you really are. This is the ſole method of becoming actually better, and thereby of recovering your loſt dignity and inward peace.

A ſixth impediment to reflection, a ſixth cauſe why we do not more and by preference employ ourſelves in it, is in ſhort the prejudice, that ſerioufneſs and joy cannot well ſubſiſt together, and the concomitant apprehenſion leſt we ſhould become ſullen, moroſe, unſociable and never have the proper enjoyment of life, were we to addict ourſelves ſo much to ſerious meditation, and to beſtow ſuch conſideration on everything. But how idle is that prejudice, how unfounded this apprehenſion! No, rational reflection is the pureſt, richeſt ſource of pleaſure, and prudent gravity heightens every joy, that deſerves the appellation, and is worthy of the man. As much as it differs from levity and an idle, wanton, merely amuſing mirth that ſinks the man to a level with the child; ſo much does it promote vivacity of mind, hilarity and good humour; ſo much does it preſerve him from that verſatility, thoſe ſudden tranſitions from joy to ſorrow, from obſtreperous gaiety

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to piteous lamentations, to which the thoughtleſs and inconſiderate are obnoxious. It is by reflection alone that a man acquires that prompt and ſure judgment concerning the true nature of things, that ſolidity of character, that ſerenity of mind, that freedom of intellect, which ſet him above the petty diſappointments and miſchances of life, teach him to forego, to bear and ſuffer ſo many things without repining, render him independent on ſo many outward objects, and cauſe him always to find within himſelf ſo many means of compenſation, ſo many ſources of ſatisfaction. And if the duty of reflection calls us to paſs many hours of leiſure in ſolitude, it does not on that account exclude us from ſociety, but renders us the fitter for fulfilling the duties of it, and for partaking in its innocent ſatisfactions with unenvious, benevolent, quiet and cheerful hearts. No, my dear friends, let not that apprehenſion by any means deter you from ſedate reflection, from ſober meditation on ſerious and important objects. Indeed ye will thus lead a ſomewhat more retired life, and join ſomewhat leſs in the faſhionable kinds of entertainment and diverſion. But ſhould this be deemed a real loſs to rational beings, to chriſtians called to immortality? No, it is actual gain; the ſureſt method of becoming better, more ſatisfied, more perfect, more happy. That joy alone which ſtands the teſt of ſerious reflection, is real, generous joy, worthy of the human being; only that pleaſure, which

which we need not bluſh to own before the God within, which we need not be aſhamed of in the ſilence of ſolitude, is harmleſs, genuine pleaſure.

And theſe, my pious hearers, are the principal impediments to reflection, the principal cauſes why it is ſo inconvenient and appears ſo arduous to many. Avoid, ſurmount theſe obſtacles, ſo will the buſineſs of reflection ſhortly become eaſy and pleaſant to you.

Allow me in concluſion, my pious hearers, to leave with you a few means of facilitation to it. Would ye learn to reflect, ye muſt not walk about the world as if ye were in a dream, with heedleſs indifference; walk with your eyes open; learn to ſee and to hear and to underſtand, with conſciouſneſs, with attention to ſee and to hear; learn to make obſervations on what ye ſee and hear, on all that paſſes within and without you; in this way collect matter for thought and reflection; and acquire the habit of rendering an account to yourſelves of what ye have ſeen and heard and experienced. The more clear and diſtinct ideas your mind comprehends; the more objects it can compare together; in the more points of view ye have ſeen and contemplated them: the eaſier will it be for you to combine and aſſociate theſe objects in your thoughts, or to part them aſunder, or to apply them to yourſelf, and therefore by reflection to work them up as it were and to refine them. — Secondly, ſeek retirement, and if time and circumſtances allow, particularly

rural retirement, if ye would exerciſe yourſelves in reflection with the beſt ſucceſs. The ſolemn ſtillneſs that prevails, while viewing the grand and beautiful ſcenes of nature, in that theatre of order and ſerenity and noiſeleſs activity, concurs with them to invite us to ſerious meditation, to excite in our breaſts a lively conſciouſneſs of ſelf, to ſcreen us from the various diſtractions of ordinary life, and communicate to our minds as it were a greater elaſticity, a nobler flight. There the illuſions of vanity loſe much of their force, and we think and judge of ourſelves and the objects around us far more impartially and juſtly. Never yet, my pious hearers, did any one, who ſhunned retirement, become truly wiſe, wiſe unto felicity. — Alleviate to yourſelves, thirdly, the practice of reflection by the attentive peruſal of ſuch writings, as may excite you to it and guide you in it. Thus your thoughts are drawn off from what was wont to employ and diſtract them; they take a more ſettled and ſerious turn; your mental faculties become more active and alert; an orient light diffuſes itſelf on your underſtanding and a genial warmth pervades your heart; you lean upon the arm of a friend and companion along the dubious journey of life, directing your ſteps to the paths of wiſdom and rectitude, and this inſpires you with courage and ſtrength to purſue thoſe paths, and not even then to quit them, when they are forſaken by that friend. Only beware that you do not ſtop ſhort at the ſimple lecture, that you ſuffer not yourſelf to be implicitly led

led by another. At certain intervals lay down the book you are reading; aſk yourſelf whether you underſtand what you have juſt read, whether you believe it, whether you think it true, whether it coincides with the reſt of your thoughts and perceptions, with your feelings and experiences, whether and how you can turn it to uſe, what particular applications you ſhould make of it to your own ſituation and preſent occaſions. In this manner truly appropriate to yourſelf all that you read and think, and blend it completely with your whole ſyſtem of thought. — Again, occaſionally write down the heads of what you have proved and decided upon, what you have diſcovered in your character and your conduct, what you have reſolved on, not ſimply for writing it down, but in order to preſerve it for your uſe hereafter. This will give additional regularity, connection, diſtinctneſs, ſolidity to your thoughts, impreſs them deeper in your memory, and may ſerve you in future as a clue in ſimilar exerciſes of reflection and in calmly communing with your own heart. — To be brief, court the converſation of diſcreet and virtuous perſons, who have habituated themſelves to reflection, and by reflection are become wiſe and virtuous. Gladly converſe with them on ſerious and important topics; and let their example teach you attention, conſideration, circumſpection, deliberation, prudence, impartiality in thinking, in judging, in the application and uſe of objects.

So many exercises and means, my dear friends, without which we shall never attain to any considerable proficiency in rational reflection. Oh let me recommend to you these exercises and means, if ye would vindicate your dignity as men and as christians, and happily reach your destination both in the present and in the future world!

SERMON XI.

The Advantages of Reflection.

GOD, all the capacities and powers with which thou haſt endowed us, are donations of thy bounty; all manifeſtly tend to the promotion of our happineſs: and if they do not promote it, if our uſe of them be attended with ſorrow and miſery, the fault is our own, it is the natural conſequence of our abuſe of thy gifts. Thus, as reaſonable creatures, thou haſt formed us capable of reflection and conſideration: and what ſources of profit and pleaſure haſt thou not thus thrown open to us! What means haſt thou not thus afforded us of becoming always wiſer, always more virtuous, always more ſatisfied and happy, and of always advancing nearer to our ſuperior appointment! How many other grants of thy bounty does this one largeſs comprehend, and what hopes and expectations of ſtill greater boons and privileges does it not warrant us to entertain! Oh that we might never fail of perceiving the high worth of theſe intellectual energies, never abuſe them, but by the true and proper uſe of them be as good and as perfect, as by them we

may and ought to become! Oh might we thus aſſert the dignity of our nature, and worthily occupy the ſtation which thou haſt aſſigned us among thy creatures, and thus ſmooth the road of life, heighten its joys, alleviate its ſorrows, and ſo triumph ever more and more in thy exiſtence and our own! May we even now ſo clearly perceive the advantages of rational reflection and ſo inwardly feel their importance, that we may thence obtain freſh motives and renovated vigour to acquire them with increaſing ardour, and to ſtudy with increaſing diligence to underſtand them better from our own experience! Accompany then in this deſign the meditations, which we ſhall now begin upon them, with thy abundant bleſſing. Teach us to underſtand our mental powers, aſſiſt us to employ them even now agreeably to the ends for which thou haſt implanted them, and cauſe us to find in their employment that refined and generous ſatisfaction, which they are intended to procure us. As thy children we preſume in humble confidence to aſk theſe mercies, and addreſs thee farther in the name of thy ſon, Jeſus Chriſt: Our father, &c.

LUKE ii. 19.

But Mary kept all theſe things, and pondered them in her heart.

FOUR diſtinct diſcourſes we have already delivered to you on the ſubject of reflection, my pious hearers; and the conſiderations they contained

tained might well ſuffice to convince you of the excellency and the utility of it. If ye accompanied me in them, you muſt have experienced, that your mind was agreeably and worthily employed, that it felt abler and ſtronger than uſual, that ſeveral objects preſented themſelves to it in a clearer light, ſeveral appeared to it more important, more intereſting, more certain, and that, if ſome of the obſervations and ſoliloquies filled it with ſhame, others again revived and refreſhed it, and imparted to it joy and hope and aſſurance. Ye muſt likewiſe have experienced, that this buſineſs is not ſo intricate, as it is ſometimes repreſented, that we have more command over our attention, than we perhaps might think, that the obſtacles we meet with to it, are by no means inſuperable, and that we have greater reaſon to be ſatisfied with ourſelves, in taking account of what we have conceived, and can put it to more various uſes in our ordinary way of life, than in regarding everything ſuperficially and tranſiently, in wandering about in darkneſs or in doubt, having no clear and diſtinct ideas, no ſettled principles, and unknowing how properly to uſe and to apply what we think and perceive. All this ought ſurely to ſuffice reaſonable beings, not inſenſible to their dignity and their vocation, panting after inward peace and happineſs, for ſtimulating them to this honourable employment, and for rendering it dear and precious to them; and I doubt not, that it has produced this effect with many of you. However, reflection,

conſideration, lonely meditation, retirement, ſerious ſoliloquy, are objects of ſo great importance; they are ſo intimately connected with our perfection and happineſs, ſo abſolutely neceſſary to the eſtabliſhment and promotion of them; that we can never too highly prize, never too zealouſly recommend them.

Permit me therefore to cloſe my advice on this head, by admoniſhing you of the great value of theſe objects, or ſhewing you how honourable, how pleaſant, how profitable and neceſſary ſuch reflection is. This inquiry may at the ſame time prove to us an encouragement to reflection and the aſſiduous practice of it.

By rational reflection, by conſideration and inquiry, man in the firſt place aſſerts his ſtation, his dignity, his rank among the other creatures of God upon earth. What principally diſtinguiſhes him from them? What raiſes him above them? What renders him capable and worthy of ruling over them? Is it not reaſon, and the uſe of it, which conſiſts in reflection, in conſideration? Ideas of external objects and ſenſations of internal revolutions the beaſts of the field have in common with mankind: but not the clear conſciouſneſs of ſelf and its difference from thoſe ideas and ſenſations; but not the faculty of recalling theſe ideas at will and for ſpecific purpoſes, of analyzing them, or of compounding them, and thence drawing concluſions; not the faculty of ſcrutinizing into the relations and reaſons of things, and perceiving their connection

connection with its own and the general happineſs. This of all the creatures of the earth only man can do; and this he chiefly does by reflection. The more therefore he exerciſes himſelf in reflection; the more he reflects in particular on inviſible, intellectual objects, on himſelf and his deſtination, on his duties and his conduct, on God and his will, on futurity: the more does he think and act as man; the more worthily aſſert his ſtation and the privileges allotted to him by the creator. How greatly on the other hand, do the inconſiderate, the wanton degrade themſelves, how nearly they rank themſelves with the beaſts of the field, in thinking and acting as though they were entirely carnal, as if no rational ſpirit reſided within them; in receiving only ſenſible impreſſions and ſubmitting to be governed only by them, beſtowing only ſuperficial and tranſient glances on all things, fixing on nothing, tarrying with nothing, hurrying from object to object, as they paſs, never in true compoſure of mind, and always deceived by ſpecious appearances and governed by ſenſuali t. Would ye therefore really ſhew yourſelves men, my pious hearers, would ye vindicate the honour of your nature, and worthily uſe the advantages with which the creator has endowed you, would you hereafter in a future ſtate not experience to your deep diſgrace the doleful conſequences of having left them unemployed or of having negligently employed them: be perſuaded to adopt

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the practice of reflection, of frequent, ſerious, continued reflection.

Reflection is ſecondly the ſureſt and in ſome ſort the only method of attaining to the knowledge of the truth and to the conviction of the truth. We may certainly by information from others, by reading and hearing, acquire much knowledge, much profitable, weighty knowledge. But only by reflection thereupon will it become our real property, and thoroughly mingle with the reſt of our knowledge and ſagacity; only by it do we learn to perceive and feel the reaſons of its truth and its connection with other truths which we already know. In like manner we may by reading and hearing learn to know, to admit, to repeat by rote ſeveral truths in matters of religion; but it is only after frequent reflection upon them that we are perſuaded in our own minds of our faith from real inſight and conviction. Whatever, my pious hearers, whatever we learn, believe, admit, without conſideration, without reflection, has no ſtability, no permanency; it is like a reed, agitated to and fro by every wind. In this predicament we are liable to be thrown into perplexity and diſtreſs by every doubt, by every objection. Our faith is as variable as the mode, as the faſhion that happens to prevail in ſociety, as the contents of the book that we have read to-day, and ſhall read to-morrow. We have neither the teacher nor the writings always at hand, that communicated to us

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our former notions, and from which we adopted them without examination and conſideration, and if we are not in the habit of thinking for ourſelves, how eaſily may we fall a prey to any error, to any impoſture, to any ſpecies of fanaticiſm however prepoſterous and abſurd! Is this however a ſtate that reflects honour on the man, that promiſes him reſt and ſatisfaction? No, my dear friends, would you acquire a certain ſolidity in thought and belief, would you recogniſe the truth as truth, would ye have an authentic, ſoothing aſſurance of it: reflect upon every information that ye receive, upon all that ye read and hear, with continued attention, and rather proceed ſlowly and deliberately, but ſurely, than with haſty and uncertain ſteps along the path of knowledge.

Only by reflection will thirdly the knowledge of the truth be lively and efficacious in us. Only thus will it coaleſce with our whole ſyſtem of thought and ſenſation, and be able to produce in us what it is calculated to produce. And what is all knowledge, unleſs it be lively and efficacious in us, if it have no influence on our temper and conduct, on our pacification and happineſs? Thus for example I may know and believe and publicly profeſs, that there is a God, a firſt, eternal cauſe of all things, and that this God is the creator, the ſovereign, the judge, the father of men; but this thought remains dead and inert in my mind, it makes me neither better nor more ſatisfied, unleſs I combine it by reflection

reflection with a thouſand other thoughts, unleſs I learn to apply it to all that I conceive and do, that I ſee and hear, that happens to me and to others, unleſs I make myſelf thoroughly acquainted and familiar with it. Thus I may know and believe, that in regard to my body I am an exceedingly weak, fragile creature, and in regard to my ſoul a being deſigned for immortality; and this knowledge and this belief remain dead and barren in me, till I reflect upon them, till by ſo doing I blend theſe thoughts with all my occupations, amuſements, views, endeavours, and cauſe them to become leading principles, the ſprings and motives of my conduct. The caſe is the ſame with all the various kinds of knowledge that I poſſeſs, however important. They become my property only by reflection; thereby alone they are interwoven with my whole ſyſtem of thought and ſenſation, and ſpontaneouſly reappear to my mind on a thouſand occaſions; only thereby do they become truly important and uſeful to me and exert their efficacy within me. Not till then can I experimentally ſay: This is life eternal, this is the path to conſummate happineſs, to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent. Without frequent, ſerious, continued reflection, without the conſtant application of what we know and think, to oneſelf, all the moral and religious knowledge in the world is therefore of no value; and a few leading ideas of this ſort, on which we frequently and impartially reflect, promote

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our perfection and happineſs far more, than the moſt copious and extenſive ſcience, of which we make not this uſe. Would ye therefore not only know the truth, my dear friends, but be made free and happy by it, not only poſſeſs intellectual riches, but actually uſe and enjoy them, not ſimply believe, but live up to your belief, then continually exerciſe yourſelves in reflection, and thereby impart life and efficacy to all that ye know and believe.

By reflection and by reflection alone fourthly reaſon obtains the aſcendant over ſenſuality, and is and yields to mankind what it is deſigned to be and to yield to them. The infant like the brute is entirely ſenſual, the one as well as the other follows every impreſſion and impulſe of the ſenſes, becauſe the one as well as the other wants diſcernment and reflection. It is only by reflection that the man riſes out of the infant ſtate, learns to diſregard the impreſſions of ſenſe, to reſiſt the impulſes of ſenſe, to judge of the worth of objects by other principles, and to ſquare his conduct by other rules. It is only by rational reflection that he forms himſelf into the man; into the man, who is maſter of his temper, who has the command of himſelf, who diſdains to be the ſlave of outward objects, the ſlave of his luſts and paſſions, who thinks freely and acts freely, who knows how to reject and renounce ſeducing pleaſures and ſplendid diſtinctions, and voluntarily to ſubmit to the preſſure of hardſhips and ſufferings, when the former are at variance with his inward,

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real perfection and the latter promote it. For it is only by reflection that he learns to diſtinguiſh between ſemblance and reality, form and ſubſtance, tranſient and permanent ſatisfaction, true and falſe honour, ſtupefaction and repoſe, and his perſonal identity from all that is without him, to attend to the remoter conſequences of things, to compare the preſent with the future, to weigh loſs with gain, and to ſubmit to the deciſions of reaſon as to the decrees of heaven. — And is not the ſame want of reflection and mature conſideration the principal cauſe, why ſuch numbers of people even in the age of manhood, even in more advanced years ſo frequently think and act like children, and like children are ſolely occupied with toys and gewgaws; why many are ſo completely ſenſually and carnally minded, have ſo little controul over themſelves, and are ſo eaſily ſwayed and driven to and fro by every impulſe from without, by every inordinate cupidity, by every momentary humour? Would ye ſpare yourſelves this diſgrace, theſe reproaches, this miſery, my dear friends, would ye not conſtantly remain children, or immerſe yourſelves in bondage: let me recommend to you reflection, and intreat you to make it a truly ſerious and important occupation.

Reflection is on the ſame account fifthly the parent of ſterling virtue, as well as its moſt powerful guardian, its faithfulleſt foſterer. Never yet did any man become virtuous without reflection; and no one has ever remained ſo without its aſſiſtance. The incon-

inconſiderate man, the trifler may perhaps occaſionally do a good action; but thoroughly good, good upon principle, conſiſtent with himſelf, that neither will nor can he ever become. This requires a certain ſolidity of character, of thought and temper, which is only the fruit of mature reflection. This requires maxims that we have adopted as the reſult of much deliberation, from a full conviction of their propriety and excellence, by which we try all things, with which we compare all things, and to which we adhere under all temptations and allurements to the contrary. This requires a clear conſciouſneſs of what we are and do and ſhould be and do; a continual regard to the relations in which we are placed towards God and man, to the poſt which we occupy and the duties incumbent on us, to the deſtination and the vocation of the man and the chriſtian. This requires in ſhort a frequent, impartial, rigid ſelf-examination, a particular acquaintance and intimacy with oneſelf, an unreſerved attentiveneſs to all the changes that happen within us and without us, and relate to our moral condition. The virtue that is not thus grounded, is not virtue, at leaſt not chriſtian virtue. But how can all this have place, how can I acquire that ſolidity of character; how learn thus to adhere to certain fixt principles; how be always conſcious of myſelf and my relative ſituations and connections, and have regard to ſo many particulars in all that I undertake and achieve; how watch thus continually over myſelf

ſelf and converſe ſo familiarly with my own heart? unleſs I exerciſe myſelf in reflection, unleſs I frequently ſeek retirement and there meditate on theſe ſubjects; unleſs I proceed in all things with circumſpection and deliberation? No, my dear friends, ye muſt either renounce virtue, that higheſt glory of man, that moſt exuberant ſource of his happineſs, or ye muſt ſtrive to obtain it by rational, chriſtian reflection.

And in what ſchool, my pious hearers, in what ſchool ſhall we ſixthly learn more wiſdom and prudence for tranſacting the affairs of life, and for pleaſant and uſeful intercourſe with our fellow-creatures; than in the ſchool of reflection and conſideration? If the vain and inconſiderate man, ſtumbles and trips as it were at every ſtep that he makes in the world; if he ſo frequently offends others, or is offended by them; if he now injures himſelf, now others by his careleſsneſs and imprudence; if he ſo often takes wrong meaſures in matters of conſequence, ſo frequently miſtakes means for ends or ends for means, ſo ſeldom is and affords what was expected of him, and is ſo often deceived in his own expectations: yet he who is everywhere attended by reflection and conſideration, is generally ſafe from all theſe miſtakes and diſappointments. Accuſtomed to view every object on more than one ſide, in more than one analogy; accuſtomed to conſider and examine all things: he is not apt to decide on anything, without having a competent knowledge of it; is not

apt to undertake anything, without previouſly comparing it with his abilities and circumſtances; purſues no ends, to the attainment whereof he is not in poſſeſſion of the neceſſary means; indulges no expectations, before he has examined on what grounds they are to be built; makes himſelf reſponſible for nothing that he is not able to perform; conſiders not merely the proximate, but likewiſe the remoter conſequences of things; lives and acts not ſolely for the preſent, but alſo for the future; and in all that he ſays and does, takes time and place and perſons and circumſtances into conſideration. And from what a number of ſcandalous ſlips, from what a number of vexations and diſappointments, muſt this preſerve him! How rarely will he need to have recourſe to evaſions, or be driven to tergiverſations! How ſeldom will he be forced to abandon his project, or to alter his reſolution! How bold and intrepid may he proceed in the line of his vocation, give an account to himſelf and others of every ſtep he takes in it, and how much more eaſily ſoothe himſelf in every, however unſucceſsful, reſult of his undertakings!

Yet more. By reflection everything that a man ſees and hears and does, is ſeventhly far more important and intereſting to him. How important to the man of reflection are the ſeveral capacities and powers of his nature, the affairs of his office and calling, civil and ſocial life, the concerns and fortunes of mankind, his brethren, the whole inanimate

and animate creation, all that paſſes within him and without him! If the vain and thoughtleſs man, while gazing at theſe objects, ſtill ſighs beneath the oppreſſion of languor, or is loſt in ſtupid amazement, or ſees and does everything with cold indifference: the other, who is addicted to reflection, everywhere finds occupation and food for his mind. Whether he employs his corporeal or mental powers, if he is labouring in his vocation: he does it with conſciouſneſs, and with a view to the reaſons, the ends, the conſequences of what he undertakes and achieves. If exempt from the drudgery of buſineſs, yet he never ſees a human being, an animal, a plant, a grain of ſand, is never aware of any viciſſitude in the natural or moral world, is never ſenſibly affected either in body or mind, but it furniſhes him with matter for thought and reflection, leads him by inſenſible degrees to important, intereſting obſervations and reſearches, frequently diſcovering to him novel ſolutions of intricate points, often calling his attention to his deſtination or his conduct, and either aſſiſting him in his progreſs along the path to the knowledge of truth, or fortifying him in his good, virtuous ſentiments and reſolutions. His mind is never idle and never otherwiſe employed than to ſome worthy purpoſe. How can ever his exiſtence, or his time, or ſilence and retirement be burdenſome to him? How can he be ever viſited by the horrid plagues of ſatiety, of ſurfeit, of diſguſt, of languor, by which ſuch numbers are perſecuted? No, in the deepeſt

deepeſt retirement, he finds no leſs, oftentimes more agreeable entertainment than in the moſt numerous companies. The kingdom of truth is immenſely large, the ſources of knowledge are not to be drained, and the efforts of the human mind after clearer light, after higher attainments, know no bounds. Is it expedient then, my pious hearers, that whatever is and happens within and without you, whatever ye ſee and hear and do, ſhould not have to you that inſignificant, deſpicable aſpect, which it has in the eyes of ſo many thoughtleſs mortals; would you wiſh that all this ſhould not occaſion you more or leſs ſadneſs and diſcontent: endeavour by reflection to render all objects important and intereſting to you. They will then aſſume a different appearance. You will learn to view and to contemplate everything more in its connection with the aggregate, in its cauſes and effects and deſigns.

For the ſame reaſon the reflecting man eighthly enjoys in a twofold degree whatever of good and agreeable he has or that befalls him. He enjoys it with conſideration and conſciouſneſs, and feels it to its utmoſt value. He enjoys it in its ſources, in its conſequences, in its connections; he enjoys it by anticipation as well as in the reliſh it leaves. It is not ſimply animal, but human, rational enjoyment. The former is entirely ſenſual; the latter intellectual and refined; the former tranſient and momentary; the latter durable and permanent. The reflecting man receives no particular benefit from God, without

lifting up his heart to him, the donor of it, without admiring the parental favour and affection, from whence it flowed, without remarking its influence on his welfare and exulting in it. Never does he ungratefully forget the good that he has already enjoyed; and never does he look forward into futurity, without delighting himſelf beforehand with the greater good of which it aſſures him. He exiſts not like the vain and thoughtleſs, ſimply in the preſent moment, and never entirely loſes ſight either of the paſt or the future. And thus he multiplies and heightens all his ſatisfactions, and enjoys them even then, when the ſources of them have ceaſed to flow.

On the other hand reflection is the beſt means of arming ourſelves againſt the misfortunes of life and ſoothing our ſpirits under them. He who is often reflecting on the mutability and caducity of terreſtrial objects: he who is frequently muſing on the various viciſſitudes to which he is obnoxious in regard to his health, his poſſeſſions, his connections, his life itſelf, from one period to another, from one day to another: him no misfortune ſurpriſes, no privation, however unexpected, ſinks him in dejection. He has already too often in the calm and ſerious hours of life foreſeen that it might, and ſooner or later would happen, for being, now that it has really happened, thrown into amazement at it, or for impatiently complaining of it as ſomething extraordinary. And he who by frequent reflection has

has made himſelf thoroughly acquainted and familiar with the conſolations of religion, with the ſources of chriſtian fortitude, will, when in want of conſolation and fortitude, be at no loſs to diſcover whence he is to derive them. Thoſe conſolations will ſpontaneouſly preſent themſelves to him in all their force, and thoſe ſources of fortitude will ſtand ever open to him, and never ſuffer him to feel any want of refreſhment and encouragement.

To conclude, my pious hearers, reflection to the man who has acquired the habit of it, is the moſt exuberant ſource of pleaſure, a pleaſure not leſs refined than inexhauſtible; a pleaſure that more than any other depends upon himſelf and his own choice, and which he may enjoy at any time, in any place, in any ſituation. When has he a more clear and inward conſciouſneſs of himſelf, of his exiſtence, of his capacities and powers; when has he a more vivid ſenſe of his dignity and his grand deſtination, when of his origin from God, and his increaſing participation of his divine nature; when has he ſtronger, more gladdening prepoſſeſſions of never-ending continuance, of everlaſting progreſſion from perfection to perfection, from happineſs to happineſs; when is he more qualifying himſelf for that ſuperior ſtate, for an entrance into the unſeen world and for the enjoyment of its felicities: than when he is employed in calm, profound reflection, when his mind comprehends ſo many objects, deſcries ſo many veſtiges of truth, obtains ſo many luminous ſolutions

on the moſt important topics of its knowledge, ſoars frequently ſo far above whatever is earthly and viſible, darts ſometimes ſo bright a glance into futurity, and already has a foretaſte of thoſe delights with which it feeds his hopes? How inwardly he now feels that he is not entirely duſt, that he is created in the ſimilitude of God, that he is allied to the angels and ſuperior minds, that within him prediſpoſitions and energies lie concealed, that open glorious and boundleſs proſpects to his view! And how great the pleaſure enjoyed by the reflecting man as often as he perceives in a clearer light ſome ſubject in which he takes a cordial intereſt, as often as he is enabled to think and to judge more juſtly of ſome important and ſurpriſing fact, to ſolve ſome doubt, to remove ſome difficulty, to be more thoroughly perſuaded of ſome uſeful truth, or to make a better uſe of it in his own behalf! When does he more exult in his exiſtence and his life, than when he exiſts and lives conformably to his nature, as a reaſonable being? Would ye therefore, my dear friends, would ye be able to underſtand and to enjoy thoſe pleaſures, which of all others are the moſt pure, the moſt elegant, the moſt exuberant; would ye enjoy yourſelves not merely as ſenſual creatures, but as intelligences, as rational beings, and taſte beforehand the joys of heaven, the pleaſures of the future world: acquire habits of reflection, of calm meditation on yourſelf and the world, on God and religion, on the preſent and the future.

Thereby

Thereby make nearer approaches to ſuperior beings; uphold thereby your fellowſhip with God, the firſt, the greateſt, the ſupremely perfect being. Amaſs thereby thoſe treaſures of knowledge and wiſdom, acquire thoſe accompliſhments, which ye will want in the inviſible world, where all that is ſenſible diſappears, if ye would there employ your intellectual powers agreeably to their deſignation, and be contented and happy in the employment of them.

And now, my pious hearers, comprehend all this together in your mind, ſo will ye aſſuredly not be able to doubt of the prodigious value, of the diverſified utility of rational and chriſtian reflection. This reflection is the grand prerogative and the real dignity of man; it is the ſureſt way to the knowledge of the truth and to the conviction of the truth; it renders it lively and efficacious in our hearts; it teaches us to reſtrain the impetuoſity and to calm the tumult of the paſſions and to aſſert the command of ourſelves; it is the parent, the nurſe, the guardian of ſterling virtue; the beſt ſchool of wiſdom and prudence in conducting the affairs of life; it renders all that we ſee and hear and do, far more important and intereſting to us; it multiplies and heightens the enjoyment of the good and agreeable; it arms us againſt misfortunes and ſufferings, and ſoothes us under them; it is in ſhort an abundant ſource of the moſt refined and generous pleaſure. What advantages, my dear friends! Oh may we be continually learning from our own experience to underſtand them better and to prize them more! Amen.

SERMONS

ON THE

GREATNESS OF GOD

IN THE

WORKS OF NATURE,

AND THE

GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

SERMON XII.

Introduction to the Contemplation of the Works of God on Earth.

GOD, whoſe glory the heavens declare, whom myriads of ſuns and worlds adore as their creator and father, even our dwelling-place, the earth, is thy work, is full of thy glory; even we, inhabitants of the duſt, in the profoundeſt reverence adore thee as our creator and father. We too rejoice that thou art and that we are, and feel our dignity in its full extent, when we are able to raiſe our minds to thee, the Eternal and Infinite, and to conceive of ourſelves as in the moſt bleſſed connection with thee. Yes, to us alſo haſt thou revealed thyſelf in all thy works. They all give proofs of ſovereign wiſdom and power and goodneſs, they certify us of thy paternal, gracious diſpoſitions towards thy creatures; they ſummon us to expect of thee pure good and conſtantly the beſt. Oh that we conſidered thy works with ever increaſing attention, ſtudied ever better to underſtand them, and perceived in them more

more clearly the traces of thy glory! Oh that we everywhere ſought and found thee, who art and workeſt everywhere, and thus had a continually increaſing correſpondence with thee, and enjoyed ever greater felicity therein! Grant then that this ſubject may at preſent be truly important to us, o merciful father! and teach us ſo to contemplate thy works, that thereby we may become wiſer and better, more contented and happy. We pray thee for theſe mercies as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

PSALM CXI. 2.

The works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein.

TO ſee the works of the Lord, which ſurround us on all hands, and to be totally careleſs about them, and to take no pleaſure at all in the view of them, — in ſuch ſtupidity, my pious hearers, none but the thoroughly depraved, the man entirely corrupted and hardened by error and vice, can be immerſed. Moſt men, even the wicked and unwiſe not excepted, retain always more or leſs ſentiment for the beauties of nature, for the glory of God in his creatures. Theſe beauties of nature are too diverſified and too ſtriking, this glory of God is too reſplendent, to be altogether neglected or beheld with

with an abſolutely inſenſible heart. — Which of you, my dear friends, has not frequently experienced this truth, and particularly during the uncommon ſucceſſion of fine days this ſummer? Who does not recollect ſome morning or evening walk, either alone or in company with a friend of congenial ſentiments, when the view of nature in all her beauty and the enjoyment of her bounty, has affected his heart with emotions of tranſport and joy, raiſed him up to nature's God, diſſolved his ſoul in holy extaſy, and made genial and benign impreſſions on him? General however as theſe effects and experiences are, my pious hearers, no leſs comparatively rare is the greater, more continued attention to the works of the Lord and the ſuperior ſatisfaction reſulting from it. And may not this defect uſually, may it not at leaſt very often proceed from our entering too unprepared into this theatre of divine miracles, into this world of beauties and bounties, and without having previouſly learnt by reflection or inſtruction what we ſhould make the chief objects of our obſervation, and how to arreſt, arrange and fix the images and impreſſions, thoughts and emotions that from all ſides ruſh upon us. Would I were able to remove this obſtacle to meditation on the works of the Lord and the delight therein! My preſent diſcourſe is intended to contribute ſomewhat at leaſt to that end. It is my deſign to offer you ſome direction as to the method of conſidering the works of the Lord. In this view I ſhall ſhew you

firſt,

firſt, what we ſhould attend to, what we ſhould conſider; and ſecondly, what ſhould be the reſult of theſe contemplations, what concluſions we ſhould draw from them, what ſentiments they ſhould awaken in us, to what actions they ſhould excite us.

Great are the works of the Lord. Yes, my dear friends, far, far too great for our comprehenſion! So great, that we are very ſoon loſt in the contemplation of their magnitude, that they are all involved in darkneſs and entirely diſappear from our view, the inſtant we endeavour to comprehend but a ſmall part of them at once. Who can long fix his eyes and his mind on the ſtarry heavens, on the countleſs hoſt of ſuns and worlds which we there behold, who can ſurrender his heart to the various impreſſions made upon us by this view, without being agitated by ſo many, ſuch grand, ſuch vehement thoughts and emotions, without being ſeized with ſuch a powerful conſternation and amazement thrilling through his frame, that he is abſorbed as it were in the awful ſenſe of his inſignificance, and retains nothing more than a faint, but bleſſed ſentiment of his own exiſtence and the exiſtence of his creator? — No, we ſhould, we will repreſs our thoughts — we will reſtrict them to the earth and its inhabitants, inconſiderable as both the one and the other may be, contraſted with the immenſe fabric of the univerſe, with the inconceivably great circuit of the kingdom of God.

Wouldſt thou there, o man, contemplate the firſt lodging of thyſelf and thy brethren, the place where thou receivedſt and enjoyeſt thy firſt terreſtrial life, where thou raiſeſt thyſelf from the ſtate of mere animal ſenſe to the dignity of a rational being and prepareſt thee for a ſecond ſuperior life, wouldſt thou there ſearch out the works of the Lord and have pleaſure therein; conſider

Firſt the variety and multiplicity of the objects that conſtitute the earth, and the creatures that dwell on it together with thee. How varied is the form of its ſurface! What an alternation of enormous ridges with ſummits of different heights, of hills and plains, of ſpacious, open fields, and of impaſſable, impenetrable foreſts, of continents and ſeas, rivers and lakes! What diverſity and what riches in various kinds of precious gems, ſtones, ores, minerals, lie concealed in its bowels! What a world of wonders is incloſed in its fathomleſs abyſſes! And who is able to enumerate the works of the Lord, the myriads of living and inanimate creatures, with which he has peopled the earth? Who can aſcertain their numbers and variety? Who can diſcriminate, diſpoſe, arrange them ſo as to enable us to ſurvey them all, and to leave no chaſm in the ſcale of things? Number, if thou canſt, the ſeveral ſpecies and tribes of plants, of graſſes and herbs, of ſhrubs and trees, from the humble moſs to the lofty cedar. How diverſe according to the diverſity of ſoil and climate! How various according to the variety

variety of the neceſſities of all living creatures! — And theſe living creatures! Who can count their numbers? Who can ſo accurately calculate the ſeveral ſpecies and tribes of quadrupeds and reptiles, of fiſhes and of birds, as that the catalogue may ſerve for all future times? Does not the number of them increaſe as it were from day to day in proportion as we become more acquainted with the earth and its productions and its inhabitants? What ſtriking variations in the ſeveral individuals, which, to the relief of our infirmity, we place in one and the ſame claſs? How many peculiarities in each according to the place it occupies, and the connection it is in to the whole? — And then mankind! How numerous their race! How great the diverſity of their mechanical and their intellectual powers, their gifts and endowments, their propenſities and purſuits! How great the diverſity of their faces and their figure, their language, their manners and their habits of life! And how vaſt then, how inexhauſtible the intellect, which this diverſity in the creatures and their deſignations inceſſantly atteſts!

Conſider farther, o thou who wouldſt ſearch out the works of the Lord and have pleaſure therein, conſider their beauty, which is no leſs great and admirable, than their variety. Conſider the outline, the form, the hues, the infinitely blending ſhades of colours, the delicate texture, the artificial ſtructure, the arrangement and compoſition of the ſeveral parts of every herb, every flower, every leaf, every tree,

tree, every plant, every greater and ſmaller, viſible and inviſible animal; conſider the beautiful raiment of the ſpring, the various charms of a flowery mead, the magnificence of a field gilded with ripening corn, the grandeur of a ſtately tree ſpreading refreſhment around in the ſhade of its branches, or perfuming the air with its bloſſoms, or laden with fruit; aſcend the acclivity of ſome mountain or lofty hill, and from its ſummit contemplate thy dwelling-place, the earth, when firſt greeted by the orient orb of day, or when its parting beams fall aſkance upon it, playing in the dewdrop as in the ſparkling diamond, diſtributing light and ſhade in endleſs contraſts, and preſenting to thy raviſhed eye a picture, changing as it were at every moment, and at every moment glowing with new attractions. Conſider its principal inhabitant, man, the gently waving outline of his ſhape, the ſymmetry of all his parts, his majeſtic port, the flexibility of his limbs, the eaſe and variety of his attitudes, the ſtatelineſs of his ſtature, of his erect countenance, the faſcination of his looks, the fire of his ſpeaking eye, the throbbings of his ſentimental breaſt, the inexhauſtible expreſſion of his countenance; conſider the captivating innocence and ſimplicity of the child, the vivacity and ſatisfaction of the youth, the grave and dignified deportment of the ripened man and the varied lovelineſs of his milder conſort; conſider all this, and ſay, whether the creator has not diſſeminated with the moſt liberal

hand upon the earth and its inhabitants beauties and charms of every kind.

What however would all this diverſity, all this beauty of the works of the Lord avail, were they not animated by his breath, did not his ſpirit produce motion and life and activity in them and among them, if all lay torpid and inert, without ſentiment of its being, without delight in its exiſtence, without mutual participation and mutual enjoyment! Even paradiſaical regions would then be but dreary waſtes! Whereas now — rejoice thou therefore, o man, who art inveſtigating the works of the Lord and takeſt pleaſure in the contemplation of them — now all is full of life, replete with life of the moſt diverſe kinds. Even the plants live; they ſwell, expand, open, ſhut up their leaves, ſuck in the juices of the earth and the refreſhing dews of heaven, fructify and are fructified, ſeem now to mourn and now again to rejoice, and perhaps are not altogether without the ſenſe of their life — occupy perhaps the firſt ſtep of ſenſitive being! If however thou wilt not preſume to allow them that privilege, lo what ſprightly ſwarms of living creatures joyful in their lives repleniſh the earth and the ſea and the air, the hills and the vallies, the foreſts and the fields! What varied tones of exultation and delight, of craving and of gratified appetites, reſound from one extremity of the earth to the other! In what various ways all are exerting and trying and exerciſing their

powers! What ſtirring and buſtling of everything that has breath! Canſt thou in the genial breezes of the ſpring and the firſt warmth of ſummer advance one ſtep upon the lawn, or in the field, or in the wood, without beholding, hearing, feeling this diffuſive life and motion propagated through all the varieties of exiſtence, without partaking in the general joy? What life and what genial ſentiment of life do the innumerable hoſts of winged inſects proclaim in their gentler or more ſonorous hum, the different call and chirp and ſong of the feathered tribes, and the no leſs diverſe noiſes of the herds and flocks, on all ſides round! — And then viſit the haunts of mankind, thy brethren, and behold there life of a more refined and exalted ſpecies; life with inward, perſpicuous conſcioufneſs; life, with deliberate, comprehenſive, infinitely extenſive views; life, daily exerted in numberleſs works of art and induſtry, in the moſt diverſified activity, and always awaking new life and diffuſing it around; intellectual life in ſhort, that raiſes man to the original fountain of his life, and enables him to draw from it the never-failing hope of an inceſſant, interminable continuance.

Conſider fourthly, o man, thou who ſearcheſt out the works of the Lord and haſt pleaſure therein, conſider the accurate and admirable connection, that ſubſiſts between the ſeveral parts and creatures of the earth, cauſing them all to promote one grand deſign, the greateſt poſſible welfare of the living.

Behold the ſummits of the loftieſt mountains, covered with eternal ice and ſnow, ſerving as inexhauſtible refervoirs of living ſprings, of cooling brooks, of powerful rivers and abundant ſtreams, diffuſing their waters, and with them refreſhment, nouriſhment, life and fertility over all the earth, ſlaking the thirſt of its inhabitants, and facilitating their communication by a thouſand means. — See how the clouds of heaven ſpeed their way from one extremity of the earth to the other, and how various their beneficial influence, how they now diſſolve in mild, refrigerating ſhowers, now ruſhing down in furious torrents or raging in tremendous ſtorms affright and fertilize all nature, now ſerving the torrid zones as an impenetrable ſhield againſt the vertical rays of the ſun, now likewiſe enabling the countryman in milder climes to bear the burden and heat of the day. — See, how the calm repoſe of winter, the balmy gales of ſpring, the enlivening heat of ſummer, the bounteous autumn, ſcattering fruits and prolific rains, how the heat of the day and the coolneſs of the night, how the difference of the ſeaſons of the year and of the day, of the weather, of the climate, of the diſtrict, of ſituation, how they all combine to ſwell, to fructify, to form, to decorate the ſeveral germs of nutriment and life, to bring them gradually to fullneſs and maturity, and to convert them again into new ſources of life and enjoyment to ſucceeding ages and generations. — See, how air and water and earth and fire ſo intimately and yet in ſuch diverſe

mixtures

mixtures and forms conſpire in every plant, every animal, every individual of mankind, to ſuch various purpoſes and effects, and how ſubſtances, apparently moſt oppoſite, are ſo accurately combined, ſo indiſſolubly implicated, and act ſo concordantly with and through each other. — See, how ſubſervient, how indiſpenſable the plants are to the animals, one ſpecies of animal to another, the animals and the plants to mankind; how uſeful, how indiſpenſable one man is to another, the countryman to the citizen and the citizen to the countryman, the rich to the poor and the poor to the rich, how one is occupied for all and all for one, how no one can ſubſiſt and be happy without another; and thence conclude how diverſe and accurate is the connection of all the works of the Lord, of all living and lifeleſs, rational and irrational creatures, and how manifeſt their tendency is to the perfection of the whole and to the common, greateſt poſſible welfare of all ſenſible and thinking beings.

Conſider however fifthly the gradual progreſs of all things to higher perfection. See, how the plant, the tree expands, grows, flouriſhes, arrives at maturity, bears fruit, propagates and multiplies, from a ſeed ſo ſmall as to be indiſcernable to thy naked eye; how the crawling maggot riſes into a butterfly, how every animal gradually acquires and communicates to others his agility, his powers, his habitudes, how the infant grows into the ſtripling, the youth into the man, and the man into the citizen of

another world. See, how buſily employed all nature is in forming out of the raw materials of the earth organic particles, irritable fibres, the primary elements of animal and human ſenſation and thought; by what various, artificial tranſmutations, ſeparations, commixtures, filtrings and refinings, ſhe prepares for the plants, for the animals, for mankind, their bodies, their forms, their juices; how great and uninterrupted the gradation on the ſcale of things, how all lend mutual aid to climb the aſcent of being; how nothing in nature runs to waſte, nothing is abſolutely annihilated, nothing retrogrades, nothing attains its entire and final deſtination at once; how they rather all, from the meaneſt plant to man, tend upwards, riſe from one ſtep of perfection to another, become gradually ſuſceptible of all kinds of irritability, of ſenſation, of life, of activity, and ſo are tranſlated from one claſs into another. See in ſhort, how man in particular proceeds from ſenſation to thought, from a merely ſenſual to the intellectual life, to wiſdom and to virtue and is ever advancing in it; through what a multiplicity and variety of exigencies, caſualties, dangers, exerciſes, reverſes, joys and ſorrows, the human race in general and each individual member of it in particular, gradually attains to its maturity, and is capable of the tranſlation into a ſuperior ſtate, into another and better life; and then ſay, whether this unceaſing endeavour and progreſs of all creatures towards the term of perfection, ſhould not confer upon all the works

of

of the Lord, which thou ſeeſt and contemplateſt, an additional value, a great importance and infinitely multiply thy ſatisfaction in them?

Conſider finally, o thou, who obſerveſt the works of the Lord, and haſt pleaſure therein, conſider the magnitude and inexhauſtibility of the energies which animate and actuate all nature; thoſe energies, which operate ſo uniformly and ſilently and yet ſo powerfully and irreſiſtibly in all and through all; thoſe energies which are in perpetual exertion through all ſucceſſive evolutions, renovations, transformations of the whole innumerable hoſt of creatures, and through all their efforts and effects, and in ſuch various methods; thoſe energies, which from what appears to be confuſion and ſtrife, produce the faireſt harmony, from what we term death and deſtruction, inceſſant life and action.

If thou thus attend to the works of the Lord, my chriſtian brother, my fellow-worſhipper of God and his glory, if thou thus contemplate with emotion the multitude and variety of the creatures of the earth, their beauty, their connection — thus conſider and feel the life and the joy of its inhabitants, their progreſs to ſuperior perfection and the magnitude of the energies exerted in them and through them, and thy heart dilates with ſentiment: oh then aſcend in thought to the original, eternal energy, from whence theſe powers are derived, to the original, eternal fount of life, from whence theſe ſeveral kinds of life and efficacy flow, to the ſupreme diſ-

penſer of all that joy which fills the capacity of thy ſoul, — to that God, who prediſpoſed, accompliſhed, and called them into being, who bears, upholds, connects, enlivens and rejoices all, who through them all reveals himſelf to his intelligent creature, man, ſpeaks to him by a thouſand voices, appears to him in a thouſand varied forms, and in all and by all as author, benefactor, father. Let theſe ſentiments, the moſt grand and noble that thou art capable of conceiving, entirely pervade thy ſoul, let them ſhed light and renewed life and ſuperior dignity on all that thou beholdeſt, let them render the Inviſible in ſome ſort viſible to thee, and make thee ſenſible to that which thou canſt neither comprehend nor conceive, the boundleſs power and wiſdom and tenderneſs, the all-repleniſhing and all-animating preſence of the Eternal and Infinite, who is alſo thy creator and father, and in whom and by whom thou liveſt and moveſt and haſt thy being!

And then conclude from the whole, what thou mayſt hope for and expect from this God, from this father, from this ſupreme, always and everywhere efficacious wiſdom and benignity, how calmly thou mayſt reſign thyſelf to his providence and ſovernment, how boldly thou mayſt lift thy eyes to him, how with childlike frankneſs thou mayſt draw nigh to him, how ſecurely thou mayſt commit to him thy preſent and future deſtinies and caſt all thy cares upon him. Thence judge, whether he, who pro-

vides

vides with ſuch parental tenderneſs for the inferior orders of his creatures will not much more provide for thee; whether he, who annihilates nought of all that he has made, will annihilate thee, the nobleſt of his creatures on the earth, the only intelligent worſhipper of his glory on it; whether he, who conducts and advances all gradually will not much more lead thee, on whom he has beſtowed ſuch greatly promiſing prediſpoſitions and capacities, to progreſſively higher perfection and happineſs.

Thence however likewiſe judge, whether this God deſerves not thy profoundeſt homage, thy moſt inward, cordial love, thy moſt willing obedience, thy utmoſt confidence; whether thou couldſt be better and happier, than in drawing nigh to him, in all things looking up to him, in continually walking in his preſence, in willing nothing but what he wills, and in doing nothing but what is well-pleaſing to him.

And if this be acknowledged and believed by thee, and the fire of devotion glows within thy breaſt, oh then in the due ſenſe of his greatneſs and glory and in the ſentiment of thy own felicity proſtrate thyſelf before him; pour out thy ſoul in adoration to him, the Almighty, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, the Creator and Father of the univerſe; love him, thy Creator and thy Father, love him with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul and with all thy ſtrength; rejoice in his exiſtence, in his nearneſs, in his continual efficacy diffuſing pure felicity; exult

exult in thy own exiſtence and the exiſtence of all thy fellow-creatures; expect for them and for thyſelf continually the beſt from him, who can will and do nought but good, eternal progreſs, eternal approximation to perfection; inceſſantly and unweariedly purſue that perfection even now, and aſſiſt alſo others in their purſuit of it, as far as thy ſphere of action extends. At the ſame time let no apparent diſorder and incongruity diſturb thy faith in infinite wiſdom and conſummate love, — no deformity, no corruption, no follies and vices of mankind rob thee of the hope, that under the adminiſtration and government of the Alonewiſe and Allgracious nothing can entirely fail of its deſign, nothing abſolutely and forever deſtroy the beauty and perfection of his world, nothing can be irrecoverably wicked and unhappy, and that all of us, ſooner or later ſhall admire all his works as unblamable, from inward conviction approve all his regulations and dealings, and triumph with all creatures in heaven and on earth in his eternal never failing clemency, and be bleſſed in the adoration and fruition of him.

SERMON XIII.

Contemplations in the Spring of the Year.

GOD, Creator and Parent of the univerſe, eternal ſource of light, of life, of joy, of happineſs, all the earth doth worſhip thee, the Father everlaſting. To thee all angels raiſe their ſongs; the heavens and all the powers therein reſound thy praiſe. The bleſſed inhabitants of the realms of bliſs, who have been witneſſes to the wonders of thy creative might, magnify thee. To thee the ſpirits of glory continually exclaim: Holy art thou, Lord God of hoſts; heaven and earth are full of the majeſty of thy glory. Thoſe miniſtering beings that bow in humble adoration before thy throne, and the worm that creeps in the ſod praiſe and magnify thy glorious name. In thee whatever is and lives is glad, all that we behold and hear on this our earth is joyful in thee, for thou haſt inſpired them with freſh energies and renewed their lives, thou haſt arrayed them in freſh beauty and magnificence. In thee alſo

alſo we rejoice, whom thou haſt placed on a higher ſtage of being and of life and formed capable of a nobler, purer happineſs than the creatures that ſurround us. Yes, herein do we rejoice, that we can ſee and feel and enjoy theſe wonders of thy wiſdom and benignity, that we can behold and feel thee, the Only-wiſe, the Allgracious, in theſe thy works, aſcend to thee, draw nigh to thee and have correſpondence with thee. God, how great, how inconceivable is thy glory! How beautiful, how admirable are all thy works! How clear and diſtinct is their teſtimony of thy paternal providence and favour! How audibly do they ſummon us to the profoundeſt adoration of thy immenſe greatneſs and power, to inward joy in thy exiſtence and our own, and in the bleſſed relations in which we ſtand towards thee! Yes, worſhip and honour and praiſe and thankſgiving be to thee, the Eternal, the Infinite, from whom and by whom and to whom are all things! To thee be glory for ever! Worſhip and honour and praiſe and thankſgiving be to thee, the diſpenſer of joy, for the ſources of pleaſure which thou openeſt to us, and for the capacities thou haſt granted us for the enjoyment of it! Oh let us all with innocence and ſimplicity of ſoul, with cheerful and grateful hearts draw from them, and raiſe our minds to thee, and in the thought of thee and in the ſentiment of thy nearer preſence enjoy the pureſt, moſt ſublime felicity whereof created beings are ſuſceptible. Bleſs in this view the meditations, which

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are now to employ us. Let them be inſtrumental in rendering us more attentive to thy voice in thy creation, and in heightening and ſanctifying the joy which the view of it inſpires. We pray thee therefore in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and call upon thee farther in firm reliance on his promiſes as he vouchſafed to teach us: Our father, &c.

PSALM CIV. 30.

Thou reneweſt the face of the earth.

BUT few people, my pious hearers, are ſo thoughtleſs and inſenſible, as not to be at all affected by the arrival of ſpring, at the ſight of nature reviving and putting on her gay embroidery. The impreſſions made by this change on our organs of ſenſe, are too various and too agreeable for allowing us to ſuppoſe that any one of a ſound mind and a heart not entirely depraved can be inſenſible to them. We behold ſo many beautiful, new forms, that mixture of mild, rich, vivid tints ſo agreeable to the eye, ſuch a variety of motion in all that was apparently dead; we hear ſo many dulcet notes inviting all around to joy; ſo many clear and diſtinct expreſſions of life and extaſy; we inhale ſo much fragrance from the teeming earth, from the buſhes, the trees, the bloſſoms, and the opening flowers; we are imbathed by ſuch a ſoft, refreſhing atmoſphere, feel ourſelves ſo much

much more free and eaſy, ſo much more apt for any motion and for any buſineſs and ſo much more capable of amuſement: that we have no need either of a remarkably vigorous intellect, or of a very delicate ſenſibility, for taking more or leſs intereſt in theſe ſeveral beauties, elegances, advantages and ſatisfactions, and for being joyful at the approach of ſpring and the renovated aſpect of the earth. But how much more various and vivid might theſe emotions, how much more rational and refined might theſe ſatisfactions be, were we more attentive to the voice of nature, were we to unite more reflection with the view and the ſentiment of their beauties, were we to raiſe ourſelves more to their author and father, were we thus to draw with all our faculties and according to our ſeveral capacities from the fountains of pleaſure and felicity that pour their ſtreams around us! Come then, my pious hearers, I will communicate to you ſome of the thoughts and emotions, that croud as it were upon the man of reflection and ſentiment, on his entering this theatre of the divine glory, and as he roves amidſt theſe marvellous works of conſummate wiſdom and benignity.

Firſt ſentiment, firſt thought: What a diverſity of animation ſurrounds me! What a ſtirring and buſtling! Everything in motion, above, below, in the air and on the ground! How powerfully everything is at work, within itſelf and without, through all and upon all! Yes, the vivifying energy of nature,

nature, or rather of the author of nature, is ever new, ever active, is inexhauſtible! There, where a few days, a few weeks ago, all ſeemed dead, where the boſom of the earth was faſt ſhut up; where only the ſad remains of withered leaves and decayed plants were to be ſeen; where the tree and the buſh ſtood leafleſs and torpid; where a general joyleſs ſilence reigned over all the ſcene, rarely interrupted by the ſound of ſome ſolitary footſtep, or ſome ravenous bird; where ſuch numerous races and ſpecies of living creatures ſeem to have vaniſhed or died away from the earth: what a change is produced! What a glorious revolution! How the lifegiving breath of the Almighty pervades and thrills through all! How everything is getting looſe from the rigours of the froſt, from the bonds of corruption! How all is ſhooting upward, putting forth and expanding! All nature is conceiving and teeming, every morning diſcloſes to the eye her progreſs in innumerable glorious births! Her efficacy is ſilent and ſecret, but uninterrupted and unabated in the air and in the water, on the heights and in the depths, in every particle of duſt, in every plant, every tree, every inſect, every tenant of the foreſt, every beaſt of the field! Each of their motions is life and productive of life, life of a thouſand ſpecies, more life, more living entity in every the ſmalleſt compaſs, than thou, though walking with open eyes and a reflecting mind among theſe living creatures, art able to enumerate and to comprehend! Yes, great,

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inexhauſtible is the vivifying power of nature, the vivific energy of the father of nature! Far from being impaired, far from declining by her inceſſant exuberance, her effects are continually more numerous, and life is everywhere always more abundant! Oh let us adore, my brethren, this eternal, never-failing ſource of life! Thence we may draw eternal life and the fullneſs of joy!

A ſecond thought, my pious hearers, that preſſes as it were on the mind of the reflecting man at the ſight of the renewed face of the earth, and inſpires him with the moſt agreeable and generous emotions, is this: The order of nature is invariable, is always the ſame. It is therefore a conſtant, ſpeaking witneſs to the being of God, his ſuperintendance over all, his providential care for all, his vital influence in all. Even now, even here it addreſſes me in clear and ſoothing accents. God is, and is the creator, vivifier, preſerver, benefactor, father of all that is and lives; he is the Almighty, the Only-wiſe; he is eſſential benignity and love. His breath is life, his look is joy and bliſs; his footſteps are ſources of bleſſing. He is and reveals himſelf everywhere; in the ſmall as in the great, in the beautiful hues and balmy fragrance of the flowers as in the effulgence and heat of the ſun. He is and works on all ſides; in the ſcarcely viſible moſs as in the tall and ſtately cedar, in the mite as in the eagle, in the creeping worm as in the ſpirit that worſhips before the throne of his glory. And where he is and works, there

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is order, connection, harmony, beauty, perfection; there is the moſt accurate correſpondence between ends and means. He, the Eternal, the Unchangeable, is always conſiſtent with himſelf, and his works are always equally great and equally glorious, from year to year as from everlaſting to everlaſting. The ſame marvels of wiſdom and benignity, which ye have ſo often been compelled to praiſe and extol, preſent themſelves again to your ſenſes and to your hearts in all their variety and magnificence, and pervade you afreſh with profounder admiration and ſofter ſenſations of delight. Go into the fields, croſs the meadows, walk about the gardens, rove in the obſcure depths of the foreſt; there contemplate the ſtanding corn, the plants, the flowers, the hedges, the trees, the animals: everywhere will ye diſcover the ſame congruity between cauſe and effect, between object and means, the ſame alternation and ſeries of things, the ſame ſtepwiſe, gradual evolution, the ſame proportionate, ſilent progreſs from the bud to the bloſſom, from the bloſſom to the fruit and to maturity; everywhere the ſame variety, diverſity and mechaniſm, the ſame ſymmetry in the form, the mixture of colours, the faculties, the propagation, the multiplication of the whole vegetable kingdom; everywhere among the living creatures the ſame wiſe analogies, the ſame ingenious inſtincts, the ſame variation and adaptation of motions and occupations, the ſame infinitely multiplied, and varied enjoyment of love and delight. And ſurely this conſtant, uninterrupted

terrupted orderly proceſs, this renovated beauty annually diffuſed over all the enlivened earth, this cloſe connection and correſpondent action of the ſeveral and however oppoſitely working energies of nature, this harmony of all the movements and revolutions in the whole viſible world: ſurely this ſhould make me feel the exiſtence and the preſence of God! Should it not remove from me every doubt of the ſuperintendance and the influence of ſovereign wiſdom and goodneſs! Yes, here, Creator and Father of nature, here, where all around me is exquiſite order and beauty, exquiſite joy and harmony, here I feel myſelf environed by thy preſence as well as by thy works; here I feel the force of thy wiſdom and love, as myſelf and all about me are penetrated by the light and heat of thy ſun; here I evidently behold thy power and godhead, for I behold and feel their effects, and every thought would torment me, every emotion of my heart would be agony, if I could not conceive and be ſenſible of thee and thereby introduce light and truth into my mind and permanent repoſe and felicity into my heart!

Joy and happineſs is the final aim of all the revolutions and phænomena in nature, of all the regulations which God has eſtabliſhed. This is a third thought, a third ſentiment, which the ſight of the renewed face of the earth offers to the mind of the reflecting and not inſenſible man. Yes, this is audibly proclaimed to us by all that we ſee and hear. Whichever way ye turn, do ye not now walk

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in a paradiſe of delights? And what ſalutes your ear on all ſides but ſounds of mirth and exultation, the celebration of the grand feſtival of nature? Conſider the rapid, luxuriant growth of the plants. How the ſilken bud unfolds its lucid leaves, how their tubes of various ſizes diſtend with ſap, how they ſhoot upward, how eagerly they imbibe the dews of heaven and the moiſture of the earth, how they are deckt with glowing colours and proudly diſplay the graces of their ſhape, how they flutter and wave in the reviving ambient air! Does it not ſeem expreſſive of ſomething like the emotion of pleaſure and joy? At leaſt does it not invite all living and thinking beings to pleaſure and joy? — And then conſider the birds ſkimming beneath the ſky and perched on the branches of the trees and warbling in the thickets, the gameſome cattle brouzing in the paſtures and the beaſts wantonly bounding in the foreſt, the reptile wriggling in the duſt, and the myriads of inſects ſporting in the air and on the ground. How all of them ſeem to be feeling, exerting, trying, uſing their renovated powers, rejoicing in them, and teſtifying their joy by all manner of geſticulations and tones! How all things approximate each other, aſſociate with each other, communicate themſelves to each other, and in this conjunction and communication what pleaſures, what tranſporting delights of numberleſs kinds are enjoyed! And what an inexhauſtible ſtock of proviſions for all theſe new comers, for all theſe newborn or newly vivified chil-

dren of nature! As each in order and in due ſeaſon ariſes and is in want of nouriſhment, it finds it near at hand, or is led by unerring inſtinct there to ſeek it where it is in plenty to be found. According to the diverſity of their neceſſities, their taſte, their deſtination, their occupations, ſo diverſe are the means preſented them by nature for their preſervation, for their growth, for their gratification. — And for thee, o man, how particularly is proviſion made for thee! With what maternal tenderneſs does the earth open to thee her fruitful boſom! What new, rich treaſures does ſhe preſent to thee for thy ſupport, for thy pleaſure, for thy accommodation! How thick ſtands the corn, as here thou walkeſt through it, and with which the ground is covered to an almoſt viewleſs extent! How innumerable the bloſſoms of the trees, wafting their fragrant odours to thy raviſhed ſenſe! What an abundant harveſt, what ſtore of fruit mayſt thou not expect! And what variety of herbs and plants are ſpringing out of the earth for thy ſuſtenance, for thy refreſhment, for thy conſumption! What a multiplicity of living creatures of various ſpecies are in the air, in the water, in the woods, in the fields, which exiſt for thy ſervice, for thy food, for thy cloathing, for thy ornament, and which are nouriſhed and preſerved by nature, till thou haſt occaſion for them! Yes, everywhere appear to thee the infallible veſtiges of a beneficent, bleſſing deity, who gives fodder to the cattle and corn for the ſervice of man, who brings forth

forth food out of the earth, bread which ſtrengtheneth man's heart, and wine that maketh it glad; who ſendeth the ſprings into the vallies that run among the hills, which give drink to every beaſt of the field and the wild animals quench their thirſt; who openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs. Where is the creature for which the creator provides not with parental tenderneſs? Where the creature to which he has not thrown open rich ſources of pleaſure? And what ſource of pleaſure is entirely ſhut up againſt man? Which pours not itſelf more or leſs into the river of pleaſure and delight that flows around him! — Yes, to diſpenſe and infinitely to multiply delight, to prepare happineſs of numberleſs kinds for all beings that are ſuſceptible of happineſs, and to invite them all to the enjoyment of it and to qualify them for that enjoyment, is and will for ever be the occupation of the Allbountiful, of this all nature is a living witneſs, this is witneſſed in ſounds of joy by the renovated face of the earth. Yes, my friend, my brother, if thou wouldſt be ſenſibly convinced thereof, if thou wouldſt thoroughly apprehend this truth, leave thy narrow, gloomy houſe in town; let thy mind expatiate at large in the open country, there let the avenues of thy heart dilate to its fondeſt affections; there contemplate the beautiful, lively and joyful world of God; there enjoy all the delight that heaven and earth beſtow; and then deny, if

thou canſt, that joy and happineſs are the ultimate ſcope of all that the deity decrees and does!

Innocent, ſedate enjoyment of nature, is a fourth thought, my pious hearers, that will then occur to your mind and be truly momentous to your heart; innocent, ſedate enjoyment of nature, and profound, inward adoration of the God of nature are always, are particularly at every renewal of the face of the earth the moſt honourable and pleaſing occupation of the ſage and the chriſtian. Yes, this is enjoyment, unalloyed, truly worthy of the man, which never draws after it either ſurfeit or repentance, never loſes its ſweetneſs and its charms, never eſtranges us from God, but leads us ever nearer to him and increaſes our capacity for his correſpondence and complacency; enjoyment, which kindles good and godly emotions in our ſouls, and is the means of awakening and nouriſhing the ſublimeſt devotion. Thou art the prieſt of nature, o man, and the temple of thy God, the gorgeous fabric of the univerſe is everywhere filled with votaries, who aſk thy miniſtration. The hill, the grove, the plot of corn, the field, the flowery mead, the cool ſequeſtered bower, each ſpot where thou ſeeſt and feeleſt the force and lovelineſs of renovated nature, and canſt lift up thy eyes and thy heart to heaven, is an altar, conſecrated by nature herſelf, whereon it is thy office to perform the ſacrifice of thankſgiving and praiſe to their creator and father. And how

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vaſt, how inexpreſſibly numerous are the multitudes of both living and inanimate creatures, in whoſe behalf and in whoſe ſtead thou art called to make this offering to the bounteous Lord of all. Thou art ſummoned to it by all that ſurrounds thee, whether near or afar off, in the heights and in the depths, all that thou beholdeſt, that thou heareſt, that thou feeleſt. If the ſun, the moon, the innumerable hoſt of worlds, that roll above thy head, depute thee to this bleſſed, moſt honourable function; if they call upon thee to praiſe and magnify the primordial fount of ever-flowing light and energy: ſo likewiſe does the plant, the ſhrub, the tree, addreſs thee in accents diſtinct and clear: We alſo are and ſubſiſt by him, from whom and through whom all things are; we alſo are the ingenious contrivance of his forming hand; us alſo has he adorned with beauty, endowed with energy and life; we alſo are gladdened by exiſtence and enjoy pleaſure of various kinds. Oh worſhip him who created thee and us, who has created thee and us for happineſs! Let that faint congenial ray of ſenſe that animates our frame, become in thy mind and in thy heart a rational, a tender ſentiment of gratitude, that mere mechanical or indefinite expreſſion of our joy be vocal in thy mouth, enraptured ſtrains of praiſe worthy of the deity! Do thou that which we are unable to perform, and thereby enjoy that ſuperior tranſport which we are incapable of enjoying. Be thus the interpreter, the ſubſtitute, the prieſt of nature! Thus do thou

refine and ſanctify their joy, adopt it entirely in thy participating heart, and be the point of concentration, from which all things riſe in mingled praiſe to him, without whom nought would be, and by whom all exiſt and triumph in exiſtence!

To conclude, my pious hearers, the renovation and embelliſhment of the face of the earth, the reſuſcitation of the life of nature is a glorious type of the future renovation and perfection of the human race, of the general reſurrection of the dead to the ſuperior life. Yes, chriſtians, when on ſome bright vernal day, I perceive all things ſpringing from the earth, riſing into light, budding, opening into bloom, puſhing upwards; when I behold that which was apparently dead and corrupted, now revived, arrayed in freſh pomp, inſpired with new vigour and rejoicing in its exiſtence: my imagination immediately tranſports me to that grand and ſolemn ſcene which chriſtianity bids us expect at the end of the world; then I figure to myſelf the final, glorious triumph over all that is called death and corruption; then I hear the ſon of the Father, who is the reſurrection and the life, the lord and judge of men, calling to the dead; lo they leave their clay-cold beds and ariſe from their tombs, lo the ſea and the deeps, the air and the earth give up the ſpoils of man committed to them, lo my brethren, my ſiſters burſt the bonds of death and of corruption, behold them all reanimated and transformed, all immortal, endowed with ſuperior powers, reſtored in the moſt perfect ſtate of

of human nature. What a ſcene of moſt aſtoniſhing revolutions and transformations! What diverſity of life and enjoyment of life, of thoughts never yet conceived and emotions never yet imagined! What a harveſt from the ſowing of all ages, of all the thouſands of years that have elapſed ſince the firſt to the laſt of mortals! What a glorious unravelment of all that appears to us now myſterious and incomprehenſible in the ways of providence and the fortunes of mankind! And this I then expect with the firmer faith, as all that I ſee before me, leaves me no room to doubt the inexhauſtible vital energy of God and his continual ſuperintendance over all his creatures; as I here ſo diſtinctly perceive, how glorious the Almighty is, in his care to preſerve, to renew, to tranſmute, to transform, and reinſtate all things, even the leaſt and the meaneſt, and to conduct them higher from ſtep to ſtep and to bring them nearer to perfection. And in this belief, in this expectation I no longer ſhudder at the thoughts of the grave, am ready without repining to commit my clay-formed body to its parent earth, and in the mean time gladden myſelf with the idea, that it will hereafter as aſſuredly proceed forth of it, reanimated and glorified, as aſſuredly as the Almighty, who cloaths the ſpring and raiſes the caterpillar into a winged inſect, ſuffers none of his creatures to periſh, and leaves nothing, that is capable of life, under the dominion of death.

Theſe, my pious hearers, are ſome of the thoughts, ſome

ſome of the ſentiments, which render the view and enjoyment of beautiful nature at once cheering and inſtructive to you, and will never allow you to feel any want of matter for rational reflection, nor of incentives to genial emotions. Would ye maintain the dignity of the human, the dignity of the chriſtian character, my dear friends, would ye be as cheerful and as happy, as it is poſſible for you to be agreeably to your capacities and your ſtation; oh beware of that heedleſſneſs and inſenſibility which would ſo deeply degrade you and deprive you of ſo many ſatisfactions. Open your ſenſes to the raviſhing ſpectacle, that is repreſented before you: let all that is beautiful and glorious in the univerſe of God, act freely and fully upon you; be all eye, all ear, all feeling in the view and enjoyment of theſe miracles of ſovereign wiſdom and benignity. At the ſame time reflect upon them; enlarge as much as poſſible, the ſphere of your viſion and comprehenſion; inquire into the cauſes, the views, the uſes, the combination of things; conſider them now ſingly, now in the aggregate, and from what ye are able to diſcover and underſtand of them, draw concluſions concerning what is ſtill concealed from you. Take farther a cordial intereſt in the joy of all living things, in the joy of the humming fly as in that of the lark mounting in matin carols or the nightingal tuning his ſoft melodious notes, in the obtuſe ſounds of the beetle buzzing in the duſt as in the ſonorous lowings of

the herd, in the dull ſenſation of the ſmalleſt worm as in the clear conſciouſneſs and the extreme ſenſibility of your brethren of mankind. Deſpiſe none of your inferior fellow creatures; be not inſenſible and indifferent to them. Perhaps ye formerly ſtood on the ſame ſtep where they now ſtand; and perhaps they will in futurity riſe to the higher ſtep which ye now occupy. They too are creatures of your God and father; on them too he deigns to beſtow his providential care; upon them too he looks down with complacency; for them too he has repleniſhed his world with ſo many beauties and goods; they too are parts of the immenſe whole to which ye belong, links of the chain which connects and holds you and all beings together. Their exiſtence is as dear to them as yours to you, and their joy is always harmleſs and the expreſſion of it always real and undiſguiſed. Even in them and through them the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, who is all in all, operates and reveals himſelf to man. — In a word, lift up your minds and your hearts to him, the diſpenſer of joy, to him, the creator, preſerver, vivifier and father of nature. Conſider, revere every energy as an effluence from his, every motion, every life as effects of his will, every beauty as a ray of his glory, every ſatisfaction and pleaſure as a boon of his parental tenderneſs, as an emanation of his infinite and ineffable felicity. Learn thus to feel his nearer preſence, and triumph in the ſentiment of his immediate efficacy and kindneſs,

neſs, of his and your exiſtence and the exiſtence of all your fellow creatures, and thereby confirm yourſelves in the ſure and certain hope that he will make both them and you, that he will render all that he has created, in every ſtate and at every period of time as perfect and as happy, as is poſſible.

SERMON XIV.

Moral Contemplations on the Appearance of the Spring.

GOD, the heavens declare thy glory, the firmament ſheweth thy handy-work. One day telleth another, one night certifieth another, how great, how powerful, how wiſe, how kind thou art. And likewiſe the earth and its inhabitants are thy work, the work of thy paternal grace and love; even they teſtify of thee and of thy majeſty. Yes, all that ſurrounds us, all that we ſee and hear, whatever we are ourſelves and have and can do, diſtinctly ſays to us: great and manifold are the works of the Lord, in wiſdom he has made them all, the earth is full of his goodneſs. Yes, to thee all nature lifts the choral hymn, thee every ſeaſon of the year extols, the ſpring above all, in her feſtive attire, in her youthful beauty and vigour, celebrates thy praiſe. All that lives and moves is glad in thee, its creator and father, and all in heaven and on earth cheerfully, immediately and fully obey thy will. And ſhall we, the nobleſt of thy creatures here

here below, we, whom thou haſt ſo highly favoured, ſo eminently bleſſed, whom thou haſt conſtituted lords over the works of thy hands; we, whom thou haſt endowed with underſtanding and reaſon, elevated to the knowledge of thee, with whom thou haſt deigned to correſpond, and whom thou haſt deſigned for immortality: ſhall we not rejoice in thee: not exultingly teſtify our gratitude to thee for that we are, and that we are what thou in thy mercy haſt ordained us to be! Shall we not hearken to thy voice; not gladly and reſolutely perform thy commands! Shall we diſturb the order and harmony of the whole? Shall not we by wiſdom and virtue and beneficence adorn thy fair creation! Shall we not with promptitude and unremitting ardour promote thy views, and purſue our ſuperior deſtination! No, far, far be ſuch inſenſibility, ſuch ingratitude, ſuch perverſeneſs, ſuch depravity from us! No, to rejoice in thee, to love thee, to praiſe thee, to glorify thee, to be ever gaining a nearer and brighter reſemblance to thee, our father, ſhall now and for ever be our honour, our glory, our greateſt felicity. To this we are incited by the voice of univerſal nature, by the ſmiling aſpect of the preſent ſeaſon. Bleſs then to this end the contemplations in which we are about to engage. Grant that we may all hearken to thy voice and pay it due obedience. Theſe our requeſts we make known to thee in the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, and farther addreſs thee as his votaries with childlike confidence, in the words which he, knowing

knowing our neceſſities and pitying our infirmities, inſtructed us to uſe when we pray unto thee: Our father, &c.

PSALM xix. 3, 4.

There is no ſpeech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he ſet a tabernacle for the ſun.

ALL, my pious hearers, all is revelation of God: nature as well as ſcripture; the works of creation as well as the doctrines of religion; the ordinary methods of providence in the government of the world as well as the extraordinary acts which formerly were done by the prophets, by Jeſus and his apoſtles. All proclaims to us the purpoſes and the decrees of the Eternal, the Infinite; all informs us of our deſtination and our duties; all preaches to us wiſdom and virtue; all encourages us to correction and improvement, to the purſuit of higher perfection; all promiſes joy and happineſs to the wiſe and good. Yes, God ſpeaks to us by all, as a father ſpeaks to his children, if we do but attend to his voice. And who can miſtake his voice, the voice of the tendereſt of fathers, in that ſeaſon of the year that ſoothes and cheers us with its delightful aſpect, that refreſhes and revives us by its balmy influence? The leſſons of this inſtructreſs ſurely cannot be miſtaken, her admonitions, her encouragements, her directions

flow

flow from her mouth ſo diſtinctly, ſo energetically and with ſuch inſinuating grace, that they muſt gain eaſy acceſs to the heart of every man who loves the truth, and poſſeſſes any moral ſenſe for the beautiful and good! Yes, what the poet in our text affirms of the ſun and the firmament, may with equal juſtice be aſſerted of all the works of God, we may alſo affirm concerning the preſent ſeaſon: There is no ſpeech nor language, where their voice is not heard, they ſpeak to all nations and tribes of men an intelligible language: their ſound goeth forth into all lands, extends over all the ſurface of the earth, and their ſpeech, their diſcourſe, to the end of the world. And to this ſpeech, to this inſtruction of renovated nature, and particularly to the moral part of it I would now call your attention, my pious hearers. Oh let us moſt willingly give it audience, and obey the call of nature to wiſdom, to virtue, to happineſs!

What then does the vernal ſeaſon teach us, to what does it incite us in regard to our deſtination and our moral conduct? The anſwering of this queſtion ſhall be the ſcope and deſign of my preſent diſcourſe.

Order, this is the firſt doctrine which the preſent ſeaſon preaches to us, order is heaven's firſt law, the ſupreme eternal law of the creator of the univerſe. Spring and ſummer, autumn and winter, ſucceed each other as regularly and invariably as day and night. Everything in nature has fixt, determinate ends, everything works by immutable laws to the promotion

promotion and attainment of theſe ends. All things are ſo connected and follow each other as theſe ends require. All takes that rank, that place in the creation, which the creator has aſſigned it: all happens at the time when it ſhould happen. All ariſes, expands, proceeds to perfection; all germinates, or bloſſoms, or matures, or bears fruit, ſuitably to the nature, the deſign, the analogies of each particular creature and to the preſervation of the whole. No creature enters upon this ſcene of things, till all is ready for his reception, till his preſence is neceſſary to the beauty and to the benefit of the whole. No one inſolently puſhes before another. No one ſtands alone and unconnected with the reſt. No one changes either time or place, either ſhape or colour, either properties or effects, either inſtinct or propenſity, either ſtrength or duration with another. Nowhere wilt thou find either real chaſms in the ſeries and ſucceſſion of things, or unneceſſary expence and ſuperfluity; nowhere either prodigality or penury. Nature is always and everywhere conſiſtent with herſelf. Order, conſiſtence, harmony conſtitute her firſt, her fundamental law. All is but one; one whole, one by innumerable, viſible and inviſible ties intimately connected, nicely fitted, inſeparable whole; a whole, whereof the parts no leſs than their conjunction beſpeak pure wiſdom and benignity.

And heareſt thou not, o man, all theſe diſtinctly calling to thee: God, who formed the world, who created thee; God, who preſerves and vivifies the

world and thee, is the God of order, he loves order above all things? Wouldſt thou be well pleaſing to him; wouldſt thou reſemble him; wouldſt thou refrain from deſtroying the ſymmetry of his world, and ſo far as in thee lies not defeat his views: let order, conſiſtency, harmony be the firſt, inviolable law of all thy thoughts and actions. Live, think, act not at random, not as the puppet of chance, or of ſenſuality, or of thy paſſions. Wander not about the world, without any ſettled purpoſe, among creatures who have all their deſtination and are all ſurely and joyfully purſuing it. Run not in a thoughtleſs and childiſh hurry now hither now thither, without having any fixt, determinate object worthy of thy purſuit. Diſſipate not thy powers on empty trifles, work not at an uncertainty. Vindicate the rank and ſtation which the creator has aſſigned thee. Never require to be and to do anything that thou art not intended to be and to do; but be and do that completely which God has called thee to be and to do, and be and do it at every time, in every place, in every reſpect. Be and become that intelligent, that wiſe, that beneficent, that virtuous, that godlike creature, which is endowed with faculties to honour the creator the moſt of all his works on earth, which ſhould in ſome meaſure ſupply his place upon it, and which alone can glorify him with conſciouſneſs and underſtanding. Attach thyſelf more and more firmly to the whole whereof thou art an ingredient; adapt and adjuſt thyſelf with increaſing accuracy to

its laws, and readily and with alacrity do and bear and tolerate whatever promotes the preſervation, the beauty, the perfection of it. Learn daily to think and act upon more juſt and inflexible principles, and let all thy thoughts, ſentiments, views, words and works be conſiſtent together and with the laws of truth and order.

All farther, and this is the baſis of a ſecond leſſon which the preſent ſeaſon of the year affords, all in nature is lively and active; all feels its powers and applies them to the ends for which the creator has implanted them. As by the vivifying breath of ſpring all is pervaded and warmed, ſloth, numbneſs, frigidity and death diſappear from the happy regions that feel its influence. All awakes, all lives and moves, in the foreſt and in the fields, in the air and in the water, on the heights and in the deeps. The plant, the tree, the reptile, the beaſt, the ſmall as well as the great, the weak as well as the ſtrong, the inviſible as well as the viſible, all feels itſelf regenerated, revived, refreſhed; all feels and exerts inſtincts, faculties, aptitudes of numberleſs kinds; all operates inceſſantly and unweariedly in its larger or narrower ſphere, and effectuates that, which, according to its ordination, it was deſigned to effectuate.

And ſhould not this general vitality, this diverſe, vaſt activity of univerſal nature, ſhould it not awaken alſo thee, o man, out of ſleep, and inſpire thee with new life and activity? How? Thou wouldſt amidſt the living, amidſt ſo buſy a world, lead a dreamlike,

a deathlike life? Abandon thyſelf to ſloth, to inaction, to idleneſs? Not feel, not exert, not apply thy faculties? How? Thou alone wouldſt ſhun labour and toil and exertion, and ſeek thy happineſs in an indolent, inactive repoſe? How? Thou wouldſt merely lead the life of a plant, or of a creature entirely animal and cleaving to the ground? Thou, who alone of all the dwellers upon earth art deſigned and enabled to lead the life of a thinking, reaſonable being, of a ſpirit, of an angel, of a godlike creature? Thus wouldſt thou degrade thyſelf beneath the beaſt of the field! Thus wouldſt thou be put to ſhame by the worm, by the inſect, which is faithful to its deſtination and performs with its faculties, what it was intended to perform! No, let nature revived and exerting her powers in numberleſs ways awaken thee to the inward ſentiment of thy ſuperior life, to the glad exertion of thy nobler powers. Let thy ſentiment of ſelf, the ſenſe of what thou art, what thou mayſt, what thou ſhouldſt become, be truly vital in thee, now that all things around thee are revived and refreſhed and feel their exiſtence. Try, as all thy fellow-creatures do, thy powers, and be as they are firm and immovable in the beſt, the faithfulleſt application of them. Operate as far around thee as ever thou canſt; be active, be induſtrious, be indefatigable in the ſphere which providence has aſſigned thee. Only thus wilt thou really rejoice in thy life and worthily occupy thy place among the living.

Again.

Again. Every thing in nature feels and exhibits joy. This is likewiſe a leſſon, an incitement to us. This likewiſe ſummons us to the diſcharge of the moſt ſacred and bleſſed of duties. Yes, hie thee to the fields, o man, repair to the grove, roam over the inhabited or uninhabited, the cultivated or waſte and ſeemingly deſolate region, walk from the riſing of the ſun to the going down of the ſame, from one end of the horizon to the other, as far as the mild dominion of the ſpring does but extend, and there open the avenues of thy mind and thy heart to the voice of nature. From what height, from what deep, from what tree, from what thicket, from what heath, from what garden, art thou not accoſted with ſounds of joy, or geſtures and expreſſions of pleaſure and delight? What wilt thou behold around thee but ſportive revelry and gambols of various kinds? What inſect ſo ſmall but joins his voice to the notes of the woodland ſongſter and to the wanton frolics of the beaſt of the field? Yes, all is triumphing in its exiſtence, its life, its forces, its condition. Every creature in its way and in its language is praiſing him who called it into being and made it to be happy. Every creature enters the ſcene with a merry heart, feels itſelf formed for enjoyment, for delight, and rejoices to run its appointed courſe. Every creature is content with what it is and has and is deſigned to be, and is not diſturbed either by envy or care in the uſe and enjoyment of it.

And thou, o man, ſhalt in this general jubilee of

nature ſhut thy heart to joy? Thou, not offer up with emotions of ſoul, to the ſovereign diſpenſer of joy, thy creator and father in heaven, the incenſe of grateful praiſe? How? Thou ſhalt not rejoice in thy exiſtence, thou, who of all the creatures upon earth alone art clearly conſcious of thy exiſtence, and canſt with reaſon and conſideration rejoice in it? Thou, who alone underſtandeſt the end and deſign of thy being, and knowſt that it is no other than perfection and happineſs; thou, who ſeeſt before thee an interminable continuance, ever higher gradations of exiſtence and enjoyment? Thou not rejoice in thy exiſtence, o man, thou who canſt ſoar in thought to the author, the preſerver of it, have communion with him, love him as the univerſal father, and from him who has already beſtowed and is daily beſtowing on thee ſo much, haſt juſtly far, far more to expect? And thou ſhalt not rejoice in thy faculties, o man, thy powers, which are ſo manifold and great, which raiſe thee ſo far above the other inhabitants of the earth, which ſecure to thee the dominion over them, which give thee an affinity with angelic natures, which are capable of an ever increaſing perfection, and allow thee to hope for ſuch raviſhing ſcenes of greater activity and felicity in the endleſs ages of futurity? No, yield thy heart to the call of nature. Let not beings thy inferiors, the beaſts of the field, the choriſters of the woods, ſhame thee; join the general concert, unite thy voice with the triumphant ſtrains that reſound on all ſides, filling every place

and

and uttered in varied tones; heighten and enliven it by thoughts and ſentiments that are worthy of thee; offer it as the prieſt of nature on the altar of thy heart in their behalf to the creator and father of both thee and them, and let it become in thy mouth an intelligent anthem to the deity. See nature haſtes to bring her earlieſt wreaths, and all the incenſe of her herbs and flowers.

A fourth obſervation, with which we are furniſhed by the preſent ſeaſon of the year, and whereby it reminds us of our deſtination and our duties, is this: all in nature is moſt accurately complicated, and all works with combined forces in the moſt beautiful concord and harmony to the perfection of the whole, to the happineſs of all that is and lives. Air, water, earth, fire, how intimately connected together! How diverſe, how great their reciprocal influence on each other, their common effort for the benefit of all the living! And where is there any thing on the earth, that exiſts ſimply for itſelf, and not at the ſame time for others? How amicably and affectionately they offer the hand to each other! All gives and receives, all upholds, nouriſhes, ſupports, promotes, adorns alternately either the other. What plant, what flower, what tree ſupplies not ſome living being with food and refreſhment and harbour and protection and joy? And what ſpecies of vegetables, of fruits, of living creatures ſerves not in return ſome other claſs of animals, or their ſovereign man, for ſuſtenance, for cloathing, for relief, for pleaſure? What

a long, unbroken chain of wants and reſources, of generally uſeful exertions and labours does nature preſent to our view? How entirely is all that among men is called avarice and ſelfiſhneſs excluded from it! How readily there does each ſacrifice itſelf for another, and all for the general intereſt of the whole! And how exactly, how inſeparably is the preſervation and the welfare, the exiſtence and the deſign of each particular creature, connected with the preſervation and the welfare of all the reſt! How little can one do without another! And how amicably does all that is homogeneous approximate, and coaleſce. How ſpontaneouſly, how intimately, does all conglomerate and concatenate in due order! How all is panting and ſtriving after ever cloſer union, and how happy, how blithe in the enjoyment of it! Wherever blow the balmy breezes of the ſpring, there all breathes amity and love, and all communicates itſelf in life and tranſport and felicity.

What a captivating picture of ſocial life! What a powerful call to more refined affection! What an incentive to the moſt unbounded and uſeful activity! Canſt thou miſunderſtand this call, my friend, my brother? Canſt thou reſiſt this incentive? How? Thou wouldſt alone remain inſenſible and cold? Alone ſhut the avenues of thy heart to love? How? Thou wouldſt live and think and work barely for thyſelf, and deem all that thou enjoyeſt not thyſelf as loſt? How? Thou wouldſt merely receive and enjoy, but give and communicate nothing? Merely be

ſerved

ſerved and not likewiſe ſerve others? Canſt thou then ſubſiſt of thyſelf? Canſt thou be happy of thyſelf alone? Art thou not dependent and weak? Art thou not connected with all thy brethren in numberleſs ways? And how couldſt thou thus fulfil thy appointment? How be and become that which thou art deſigned to be and to become? No, let nature inform thee of thy duty and the ſources of thy felicity. She addreſſes thee through every one of her creatures: ſeparate and withdraw not thyſelf from thy brethren, if thou coveteſt to be good and happy. They want thee, and thou art in want of them. Their welfare is thy welfare, and if they ſuffer, thou ſuffereſt alſo. Open every avenue of thy heart to the ſincereſt benevolence, the moſt cordial affection for them all. Baniſh every ſordid affection, all ſelfiſhneſs from it. Impart thyſelf freely to others; give them readily and cheerfully, according to thy means and abilities, if thou wouldſt not receive and enjoy their benefactions with the baſeſt ingratitude. Work unremittedly for them, if thou wouldſt that they ſhould work for thee. Never ſeparate thy advantage and thy pleaſure from their's, but without reluctance ſacrifice both to the public good. Break not the chain of reciprocal ſervices and generally uſeful exertions, on which the welfare of the whole community, as well as thy own depends. Diſſeminate around thee as much life and joy and happineſs, as ever thou canſt, if thou wiſheſt thyſelf

to

to be truly joyous in life, and to enjoy unmingled ſatisfaction and laſting happineſs.

The preſent ſeaſon of the year gives us yet more leſſons of wiſdom and virtue, my pious hearers. Whatever we here perceive, obeys the laws of the creator, fulfils his will no leſs preciſely and unlimitedly than incontinently. Every thing attains his ends, however great, however complicate, however remote. No objection, no oppoſition, no negligence, no liſtleſſneſs retards or defeats them. All conſpire in running as it were, to be, to do, to achieve what the creator wills that they ſhould be and do and achieve. He wills that the ſun ſhould enlighten, warm, fructify the earth, and it enlightens, warms, and fructifies it from his riſing to his going down. He wills that all, which was dead, ſhall riſe to life again, and be joyful in its life, and all lives and moves in the field and in the foreſt, in the heights and in the depths, and rejoices in its life. He wills that the earth ſhould deck itſelf with plants and flowers, that the tree ſhould adorn its boughs with bloſſoms, that the corn ſhould grow up for the harveſt, and all immediately ſtands arrayed in beauty's roſeate ſmile and youthful vigour, anouncing fertility and bleſſing. His new creating word pervades all nature; it is underſtood of all, the inanimate as well as the living, the inviſible as well as the viſible. It is obeyed by the moſs on the naked rock as by the cedar of the foreſt, by the worm in the ground as by the ſun in the firmament.

firmament. Yes, if he ſpeak, it is done; if he command, it ſtands faſt.

And thou, o man, ſhalt thou miſtake this general call to obedience, to the moſt willing, moſt unlimited obedience to thy creator! Shalt thou alone preſume to reſiſt him, whom heaven and earth obey! Thou, who alone of all the creatures of the earth knoweſt thy creator, and knoweſt him as the father of all; thou, who alone canſt perceive the juſtice, the wiſdom, the benignity of all his commands, diſcover the views of them, and enjoy with ſoothing conſciouſneſs the bleſſed conſequences of thy obedience? No, beware of ever wilfully tranſgreſſing his laws, leſt the beaſts of the field, leſt all the creatures around ſhame and condemn thee. Beware, amidſt the myriads of dutiful ſubjects of thy God, of being the only rebel in his empire! No, attend to the voice of thy creator and father; revere his commands with childlike ſubmiſſion; fulfil them without oppoſition or delay; rejoice in being and in doing that which God wills that thou ſhouldſt be and do. Unite with all his creatures in heaven and on earth, to promote and to attain his grand deſigns; and though others may excel thee in abilities and force, yet let none tranſcend thee in promptitude and zeal. Let obedience, the moſt punctual, the moſt cheerful, the moſt determined obedience be thy glory, as it is the glory of the whole creation!

To be brief, my pious hearers, we perceive in the preſent ſeaſon of the year, how all in nature gradually

ally unfolds, climbs upwards ſtep by ſtep, approaches continually nearer to its deſtination, its higheſt pitch of perfection; and this too is inſtructive and awakening to us. The boſom of the earth is fertilized, and brings forth and nouriſhes fruits of numberleſs kinds; it receives ſeed and makes a return to its inhabitants a hundred and a thouſand fold. The germ ſwells, ſprouts, ſhoots upwards, becomes a plant; the plant grows into a tree; the tree extends itſelf in arms and branches, blooms, and bears that fruit which it is deſigned to bear. The flower blows, puts on its feſtive dreſs, diffuſes fragrance all around, and invites both man and beaſt to the enjoyment of it. The beaſt of the field acquires freſh ſtrength and powers from day to day, never ſwerves from the line of its deſtination, approaches it more and more, and in a ſhort time completely attains it. The worm prepares itſelf for its approaching transformation, and the moment of its emancipation being come, ſoars from the earth into the air. All grows, all extends its ſphere, all works diligently and gladly, for itſelf and for the next generation, all is in purſuit of a ſuperior ſtate, of its completion.

And thou, o man, hoodwinked by pride, or ſhackled by ſloth, wouldſt ſtand ſtill on the ſtep which thou haſt once aſcended? Thou, who alone ſeeſt before thee an everlaſting duration, an unterminating progreſs! Thou wouldſt think ſo meanly, ſo baſely, as to be content with that degree of intelligence, of wiſdom, of virtue, of uſefulneſs, of happineſs?

neſs? Thou wouldſt leave thy great prediſpoſitions uncultivated, thy vaſt capacities and powers unevolved? Wouldſt ſettle in the ſtate of moral childhood, not ſtrive after more mature, more manly wiſdom and force, only ſhew bloſſoms and not bear fruit, only act and live for the preſent moment and not for futurity? No, do thou alſo ſtrive after progreſſively higher perfection. Complete thyſelf. Be, become, do all that thou art ever able to be, to become, to do. Strive to become always more intelligent, always more wiſe, always better, always more ſerviceable and uſeful. Be continually mounting higher from the ground, above all that is viſible and earthly. Be ever approaching nearer in mind and in heart to the primeval fount of light, of life, of force, of happineſs, and from its plenitude draw grace for grace. Be preparing with ever increaſing diligence and care for that great transformation which ſoon or late awaits thee; be ever gradually looſening the ties which ſtill attach thee to the ground, and make it thy grand concern that thou mayſt expect a plentiful harveſt in the future world from thy preſent ſowing.

Well for us, my dear friends, if we thus obſerve and follow the dictates of nature, in the voice of the ſpring! Well for us, if we learn from it order, induſtry, harmleſs, holy joy, univerſal charity and uſefulneſs, willing obedience and unwearied purſuit of our proper object! Well for us, if we thus everywhere ſubſtantiate the preſence of our creator and

and father, hear him ſpeaking to us through all his works, in all the viciſſitudes of his creation, in every new ſcene on this grand ſtage of wiſdom and benignity, ſubmit with alacrity to be taught and directed by him, and like dutiful children run our courſe as guided by his hand! This, yes, this is the road that leads to real wiſdom, to the ſummit of perfection and happineſs!

SERMON XV.

Contemplations on the Starry Sky.

GOD, ſenſible as we are of the immenſe diſtance that is between thee, the Eternal and Infinite, and us, inhabitants of this nether world; yet we are no leſs ſenſible, and we rejoice in the ſentiment, that we originate from thee, are formed in thy ſimilitude and ſtand in correſpondence with thee. Though we be duſt, yet are we not ſo entirely! Thy ſpirit lives and operates in us and by us. Quickened by thy energy, we can raiſe ourſelves to thee, know thee, and triumph in thee! We can perceive thee, the Inviſible, in thy works, admire their beauty and grandeur, deſcry in them the veſtiges of thy ſovereign perfection, and in the adoration of thee taſte ſpiritual, celeſtial joy! God, what is man, that thou art mindful of him! What is the ſon of man, that thou haſt elevated him to this dignity, made him capable of ſuch privileges and felicities! Ah let us now be ſenſible of their value to its full extent!

Lift

Lift up now our minds and our hearts entirely to thee! Give us to behold a ray of thy glory? Let it dart light into our intellect, and fill our hearts with a pure and holy joy. Strengthen thy ſervant, that he may ſpeak of thee and thy works not without inward ſentiment of thy greatneſs and majeſty. Kindle in his breaſt the flame of devotion, and let the fervour of it be communicated to us all. We pray thee for theſe mercies in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, our ſaviour, who has taught us thus to addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

When I conſider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?

EVERYTHING in nature is inſtructive, my pious hearers, the lifeleſs as well as the living, the ſmall as well as the great, the part as well as the whole. All proclaims to us the greatneſs of God: all reminds us of our deſtination and of our duties. All is the voice of our father in heaven, who leads us, his children, as it were by the hand, ſhews us his works, awakening us thereby to reflection and guiding us to wiſdom and happineſs. Every ſtone, every plant, every beaſt, every man is a herald of his wiſdom, his power and benignity; a waymark to him

him who has created all and upholds and governs all, and in whom we are and live and act. Yes, all that environs us, is inſtruction, admonition, warning, encouragement, comfort to him who has eyes to ſee and ears to hear, and a heart to conceive.

Meanwhile there is perhaps nothing of all that we can behold, that more elevates the mind, and all at once — ſhall I ſay overwhelms or pervades it, with more and grander thoughts and emotions, than the view of the ſtarry ſky. He that remains unmoved and inſenſible at this ſight, who does not then apprehend the voice of the creator and father of nature, does not there diſcern the footſteps of conſummate power and wiſdom, and is not abſorbed in the admiration of them, is ſtill ſtanding on the lowermoſt ſtep of humanity, not far above the beaſts of the field. — What impreſſions did this ſight make on the pſalmiſt, from whom we have borrowed the words of our text, how ſlender ſoever the knowledge which he had might be, in compariſon with ours concerning theſe miracles of the deity! When I conſider thy heavens, ſays he, and the moon and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained, I am forced to exclaim; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?

And can theſe ſentiments be ſtrangers to you, my dear hearers? Have ye never in the ſolemn ſtillneſs of the night, when the heavens diſplayed their magnificence before you, been touched with the grandeur, the majeſty of the view, never mentally

fa'len proſtrate in the duſt, and penetrated with humility and devotion, with a thouſand ſoothing preſages, worſhipped him, who created the ſun and the moon and the ſtars, and by whoſe command they move and act? No, to many of you theſe moments of ſacred emotion, of ſuperlative enjoyment, the moſt fervent aſpirations of heart and mind to God cannot be unknown! Oh that I might be enabled to contribute ſomewhat this day to multiply and to heighten theſe your refined ſatisfactions, and to excite an avidity for them in thoſe by whom they are not as yet underſtood! My deſign is to entertain you with a few conſiderations on the ſtarry heavens; and oh that I were able to tell you all that they ſeem to ſay to me, as often as I contemplate them in nocturnal ſilence! This at leaſt they call out to me diſtinctly, in terms that cannot be miſunderſtood: Adore the grandeur of God: be ſenſible of thy inſignificance and learn humility: have a proper ſenſe of thy dignity and learn to think generouſly and nobly: preſage thy future perfection and happineſs and get a foretaſte of them! Four points which ſurely merit the whole of our attention.

Hear then the voice of the ſtarry ſky, o man! It ſays to thee: Adore the greatneſs and glory of God! And how couldſt thou fail of perceiving him, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Almighty, the Supremelywiſe, the Allgracious, in theſe his works! Such ſtupendous works! Who can ſurvey their multitude,

multitude, their countleſs hoſt; who mete out their bulk and their diſtance; who deſcribe their order, their connection, their motion, their benign influence on the happineſs of all living and ſenſitive beings? Where ſhall we look for beginning, for middle, for end! — The heavens ſurround thee entirely, o man! On every ſide of the globe which thou inhabiteſt, where the ſun begins to roll his fiery orb and where he ſets, to the ſouth and to the north, a freſh innumerable hoſt of ſtars, of ſuns and worlds appear. Already with thine eye thou diſcerneſt more than thou canſt number; on all ſides they dart their rays from the remoteſt regions of the great expanſe upon thy eye; and if thou apply to it the inſtruments of art, thou there ſeeſt millions of luminous bodies, even where thou ſawſt before only a pale continued gleam of light. — And if thou elevate thy mind from one ſtar to another, from one ſun to another, and thence conſider the ſtarry ſky, when wilt thou ceaſe to diſcover new theatres of wonders? Where find the confines of the works of the Infinite? Millions perhaps of theſe luminous bodies, whoſe rays have been conſtantly ſtreaming down to thy eyes with inconceivable velocity from the birth of creation, have not yet completed their journey in thoſe thouſands of years! — And now think on the far more numberleſs opake bodies, for whoſe ſakes theſe ſources of light and life exiſt, and which thou, with very few exceptions, canſt neither diſcern with thy naked nor aſſiſted eyes.

Since for thee thoſe remoter ſuns are certainly not there, o man; ſuch a ſuppoſition would be the effect of unpardonable vanity. As thy ſun enlightens, warms, enlivens thy terreſtrial ball with its inhabitants, infuſing force and joy into every claſs of ſenſitive being; ſo do thoſe innumerable hoſts of other ſuns in regard to the worlds which the creator has aſſociated to them. In the empire of that God who is eſſential wiſdom and love, nowhere can there be pomp without utility, means without object, cauſe without effect; there cannot be ſenſeleſs, joyleſs, deathlike torpor, there muſt force and activity, life and felicity everywhere prevail! Yes, the immenſe creation of God is filled throughout with myriads of myriads of living, ſenſitive, thinking beings, capable of felicity, who all praiſe their creator, and triumph in the enjoyment of his bounties. Every ſtar is a ſun; every ſun has its larger or ſmaller ſyſtem, its nearer and remoter orbs; every orb has its peculiar inhabitants, which from their ſolar beam derive light and life and fulneſs of joy.

And if thou now, o man, endeavour to form a conception of the whole of this infinite ſyſtem of ſuns and worlds, and then raiſe thy mind to him who made and preſerves them all, how great, how inconceivably great muſt he, the creator and father of all worlds, the primordial ſource of energy and motion, the firſt, eternal cauſe of all things, be! — Oh proſtrate thyſelf before him in the duſt, in profoundeſt reverence adore him, the Incomprehenſible,

the Unſearchable! Him, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things that are and will be to all eternity! Him, the Almighty, who called into being all theſe ſuns and worlds, whoſe dimenſions, diſtance and gravity ſo far ſurpaſs all thy conceptions of meaſure and ſpace and weight; holds them all in his hand; ſuſtains and vivifies all; and through them effectuates what he will in all parts of his domain! Adore him, the Supremelywiſe, who ſo arranged them, ſo diſtanced them, ſo connected them, ſo counterpoized them, ſo regulated their motions and determined their courſe, that all concur to the ſame final aim, all act in concert, all remain invariably in their proper ſphere, all are approaching and none come in contact, no motion however violent diſturbs another, no globe however ſtrongly hurled retards the impetuous progreſs of another or impels it away from its preſcribed path! Adore him, the Allgracious, the God of love, who in his immenſe benignity has produced ſo much, ſo infinitely much life and joy and felicity around him from that primeval life and felicity which filled himſelf, who conſtantly looks down with more than parental tenderneſs and affection on the whole of his boundleſs creation, and pervades it every inſtant with new emanations of his divine all animating and all bleſſing energy! Yes, be abſorbed in devotion, in adoration, o man, when thou contemplateſt this theatre of the marvels of thy God! Be ſenſible to his infinite, unſearchable greatneſs, loſe thyſelf in

the admiration of his glory! Let gratitude and honour and praiſe aſcend from thy labouring breaſt to the God of heaven, and be happy in this worthieſt of all occupations!

But be ſenſible alſo to thy inſignificance and learn humility. This likewiſe thou art directed to do by the conſideration of the ſtarry ſky. Art thou ever elated by the vaineſt of all human paſſions, fooliſh pride, o man; does it ever induce thee to forget thy frailty or to exalt thyſelf above thy brethren; at ſuch times by all means contemplate this ſpectacle of divine magnificence and glory. Look upwards with me and anſwer. Canſt thou number the ſtars? Canſt thou call them all by their names? Knoweſt thou the power that raiſed, that upholds them, that preſcribed to them their courſe, aſſigned them their ſtation, appointed their riſing and their ſetting? Knoweſt thou their form, their ſtructure, their internal conſtitution, the millions of worlds that revolve about thoſe millions of twinkling ſuns, and the innumerable creatures that inhabit theſe worlds? Canſt thou tell when it was that each of thoſe ſuns, of thoſe worlds firſt aroſe, how long each is calculated to purſue its orbit, how long they are to ſhine and when to loſe their effulgence, when reach their final term? — Canſt thou define the might of him whoſe word produced, who marſhals and conducts this hoſt? Canſt thou from this obſcure ſojourn ſurvey the whole univerſe of light? Wouldſt thou not at any diſtance however prodigious

prodigious deſcry new heavens, new ſuns, new worlds, as numerous as thoſe thou now ſeeſt vaniſh from beneath thy feet? — And if thou apprehend and feel this, art ſenſible of thy ignorance and the greatneſs of God, when thou haſt caſt a few extenſive glances upwards and downwards, in the boundleſs circuit of creation; then look on thy abode below, upon thyſelf, and compare the earth with the heavens, the viſible with the inviſible, and thyſelf with all that is without thee! What is now the globe which thou inhabiteſt, in compariſon with this unmeaſurable all? Is it more than the drop that hangs to the bucket, more than a particle of duſt that cleaves to the balance? And thou, what art thou to the globe which thou inhabiteſt? Number, if thou canſt, the generations of mankind that have lived before thee and who now are ſleeping in the duſt, and the generations that are yet to ariſe after thee, and whoſe duſt will hereafter be mixed with thine! Count all the animals that now ſwarm upon the earth, all the human beings that live and move upon it; ſet theſe hoſts of terreſtrial inhabitants againſt the infinitely more numerous hoſts of the other inmates of the globe; and ſay, doſt thou form a great, a conſiderable part of the whole? How far then does thy ſphere of action extend? How many ſpans does thy power comprehend? What mighty exploits doſt thou achieve, even though thou be a conqueror? Thou art ravaging a molehill, or increaſing the handful of earth which thou calleſt thy

kingdom, by the addition of a ſecond! And how much ground wilt thou hereafter cover with thy duſt? How long will the ſandhill laſt that includes it? — O man, muſt thou not be loſt in the multiplicity of the creatures of the earth? And the whole earth, is it not loſt in thy conceptions amidſt the ſtill greater multiplicity of worlds by which it is ſurrounded? And thou canſt ſtill be proud! Still fancy thyſelf ſomewhat from thy ſcience and erudition, thy authority, thy dominion, thy riches! Still deem thyſelf the moſt conſequential of all creatures! Still believe that all exiſts on thy account, that all ſhould be regulated by thy deſires, that all ſhould be ſubſervient alone to thee! Thou ſhalt ſtill imagine, that the creator acts unjuſtly by thee, if he cares not ſolely for thee, but alſo for others! Still think thyſelf injured, unleſs thy fellowcreatures, the worms that creep along with thee, hold thee to be better than themſelves, unleſs they acknowledge thy ſupremacy, follow thee with implicit obedience! Oh canſt thou here, canſt thou while viewing the ſtarry ſky be proud; then thou haſt loſt what alone, what truly ennobles thee, thou haſt loſt thy reaſon!

My deſign however is not by theſe conſiderations to diſcourage thee, o man, or to render thee puſillanimous. Thou oughteſt not to be proud, but neither ſhouldſt thou be of an abject mind, not hold thyſelf to be more, but likewiſe not leſs, than in reality thou art. If the ſtarry ſky ſay to thee: Be ſenſible to thy inſignificance and learn humility, it alſo

alſo ſays thirdly to thee: Be ſenſible to thy dignity and learn to think accordingly. Thou muſt indeed be as it were abſorbed in the innumerable multiplicity of creatures and worlds that environ thee. Indeed the ſpace which thou occupieſt among them, muſt appear to thee infinitely ſmall, the poſt which thou filleſt among them, comparatively very inconſiderable, and all earthly glory, all the magnificence of thy dwelling, of thy garments, of thy artificial ornaments as childiſh toys. Indeed every look thou ſhalt caſt on the immenſe fabric of the univerſe, every attempt to form an adequate conception of the magnitude, the order, the combination of it, and the accumulating difficulties and unfathomable abyſſes, that ſtop thee at every ſtep of thy reſearches, ſufficiently tell thee how ignorant, how weak, how circumſcribed thou art; they leave thee no room to doubt, that thou art able to decypher only ſome few ſcattered characters, to read only ſome few ſolitary, detached ſyllables in the book of nature, which its Infinite Author lays before thee; and that there muſt be intelligent, created beings beſides thee, who as far excel thee in knowledge and ſagacity, as thou, though ſtanding on the extreme verge of thy terreſtrial career, excelleſt the newborn child of man. — But already this ſenſe of thy ignorance and thy limitation, o man, already this inſatiable thirſt for light and knowledge, theſe unremitted efforts to extend thy province of action, already theſe compariſons which thou canſt draw between thyſelf and beings

beings of a ſuperior order; even the miſtakes which thou committeſt on the road of inveſtigation, even the moſt unſucceſsful attempts that thou makeſt to connect the viſible with the inviſible, time with eternity, the creation with the creator: theſe tell thee, that thou art not entirely duſt; that a ſpiritual, active energy is within thee, which elevates thee far above the ground, and which is not and effectuates not yet, all that it may be and effectuate. —

Yes, amidſt all thy meanneſs be ſenſible to thy elevation, under all thy limitations retain a ſenſe of thy dignity. Thou, thou alone of all the tenants of the earth canſt lift thy eyes from the ground whereon thou walkeſt, and direct them upwards and there perceive the countleſs hoſt of ſuns and worlds. Thou, thou alone of all the inhabitants of the earth, art moved and tranſported at that celeſtial ſcene of glory. Thou at this view art pervaded by ideas and emotions that ſwell thy ſoul, ſet all the powers of thy mind in action, and yet are much too great, much too numerous, for thee to comprehend, or wholly to conceive.

And then if thou recollect, that man, thy brother, however weak and limited he may be, at leaſt computes, if not accurately aſcertains the magnitude, the gravity, the diſtance, the relations of ſome of theſe ſuns and worlds to each other; calculates their motion and their orbit; that he is able to ſpecify the ſtations they have occupied for thouſands of years in the immenſity of ſpace, the connections in which

which they ſtand to one another, the laws by which they move and act; that by his artificial inſtruments he can bring rays of light from ſome heavenly bodies ſo remote as to be otherwiſe utterly concealed from him, to his eyes and render them viſible; and that he can in thought, ſtill ſwifter than the rays of light, ſoar above all that he ſees, and conceive it to be, immenſe as it is, an imperceptibly ſmall part of the whole, as only the outer pavilion of heaven: art thou not here obliged to exclaim with the pſalmiſt: Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, that thou haſt endowed him, the inhabitant of the duſt, with ſuch capacities, that thou haſt granted him to ſee ſo much from the darkneſs that ſurrounds him, and to aſcend in thought ſo far above it?

And if thou then proceed upwards from the creatures to the creator, theſe ideas will ſpontaneouſly and impreſſively ariſe in thy mind: The God who formed theſe ſuns and worlds, ſuſtains and preſerves, enlivens and gladdens them with all their inhabitants; he is alſo my God, my maker, my preſerver; he knows, he loves even me; my happineſs is alſo his everlaſting purpoſe! I know, I feel that he is, that he is near to me, that he is all in all! In his ſight nothing is little and nothing great; he ſurveys all at one glance, he animates all by his power, his goodneſs fills heaven and earth! And of this God I can conceive, with this God I can have communion, in this God I can rejoice! If thou cheriſh theſe vivid ſentiments, o man, what

bliſsful

bliſsful emotions muſt pervade thy ſoul! Canſt thou ſtill miſtake thy dignity? Still harbour mean and groveling ideas of thyſelf and thy deſtination? Canſt thou ſtill refrain from being aſhamed of every ignoble, childiſh purſuit, and rouſing thyſelf to a worthier application of thy powers?

How? Thou confine thy affections, views, efforts, exertions, to the narrow round of animal, ſenſual occupations and pleaſures? Does it become thee to place all thy happineſs in the goods of the earth? Shalt thou be covetous of the ſhining dirt beneath thy feet, be attached to filthy lucre, waſte thy faculties and thy time in adding one piece of glittering clay to another and afterwards in counting over thy laborioufly accumulated hoard? Shall it be the object of thy ambition to climb a little higher than thy brethren on the grain of ſand which thou inhabiteſt and then to look down upon them with ſcorn? Are theſe exertions worthy a creature that can lift his eyes to heaven, ſoar in meditation above millions of ſuns and worlds and preſs forward to the creator of the univerſe, the lord of life and light?

No, thou art formed for higher purpoſes, o man. Anticipate, this too thou mayſt learn from the contemplation of the ſtarry ſky, anticipate thy future perfection and happineſs, rejoice in it beforehand, and qualify thyſelf for it continually more and more. At preſent thou occupieſt an inferior ſtep on the ſcale of things. But the avidity, the capacity, the effort to mount higher, thou feeleſt in thy breaſt,

and

and which the creator cannot have given thee in vain! Why would he have diſplayed this ſtupendous ſcene before thee, why enable thee at the ſight of it to riſe above all that is earthly and tranſitory, above thyſelf, and kindle aſpirations in thy ſoul, which nothing of all that is here below can ever ſatisfy? No, he, the Faithful and True, the Allgracious cannot and will not deceive thee! He will not warrant thee in the preſentiment of any perfection, of any felicity, which he has determined never to grant thee! He will not mock thy expectations, he cannot trifle with thy hopes. No, thou canſt, thou ſhalt proceed from one ſtep of perfection and felicity to another, canſt and art deſigned to become progreſſively wiſer, progreſſively better, progreſſively happier! This is the decree of thy creator and father in heaven! This is declared to thee by the whole innumerable hoſt of his ſuns and worlds! — Lo, here in his immenſe dominion are ſources of light and knowledge that never fail, from which we may draw from everlaſting to everlaſting and which no created intellect ever can exhauſt! Here is matter for eternal thought, for inceſſant diſcoveries, for ever new tranſports of the ſublimeſt, moſt extatic devotion! Here are innumerable ſocieties of more purified, more perfect worſhippers of God, whom we may join, with whom we may aſſociate, in the union and intercourſe with whom we may taſte ineffable felicity and bliſs! Here are infinite means and opportunities and motives, to exerciſe our faculties,

to

to evolve them entirely, to extend our ſphere of action, and to be and to become all that at preſent we cannot be and become! Here the pleaſure procured to us by the contemplation of nature, the exertion of our faculties, the practice of beneficence, the love of God and man, preſents itſelf in numberleſs glorious forms! Here are ſeats of the greateſt, moſt generally uſeful induſtry, ſeats of the moſt inward, effective love, of the pureſt, divineſt joy! Yes, here we may live and act from one eternity to another, ever mount higher, ever know more truth, do and enjoy more good, approach ever nearer to deity, and be perpetually more bleſſed in the participation of it! No expectations can be here too ſanguine, no hopes too aſpiring! The infinity of God and the immenſity of his univerſe, what proſpects are opened to us by them in the remoteſt futurity!

Forget not then, o man, forget not thy future grandeur! Cheriſh the thought of it; rejoice in it by anticipation; contend for ſuperior dignities, for more exalted ſituations in the kingdom of thy God; conceive nothing, ſay nothing, do nothing that may diſqualify thee for it, that may divert thee from it. Be faithful in thy ſtation, in thy calling, in the management of thy property, in the uſe of thy faculties, that hereafter more and greater matters may be entruſted to thee! Follow Jeſus, thy leader and forerunner, him, whoſe faithfulneſs and integrity the Father has crowned with ſovereign power and glory, whom he has exalted above all the court of heaven,

heaven, and made the king of angels and of men. Live, ſuffer, conquer with him and like him, that thou mayſt reign with him hereafter!

Here, o chriſtian, let the truth of that declaration of our ſaviour ſink deep into thy heart: In my father's houſe are many manſions; there is room, occupation, joy, felicity enough for all his votaries, however different their capacities, their abilities, their exigences, their acquirements, their various approximations to perfection may be! I go to prepare the places for you, will aſſign to each of you the place that ſuits him beſt, where he may be the happieſt in himſelf and the moſt uſeful to his brethren! Oh ſublime, tranſporting proſpects! May never infidelity and doubt, never vanity and ſin overſpread them with their dark and chilling miſts! May they never entirely exclude them from our benighted minds, never damp the native ardour of our ſouls panting after light and force and felicity! No, we will follow thee, o thou lamb of God, whitherſoever thou goeſt, thoſe raviſhing proſpects ſhall ſoothe and refreſh us in all our conflicts and trials, inſpire us with courage amid the dangers that beſet us, with reſignation under all the afflictions of life, and animate us even in death with hope and aſſurance for ever! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

On the Viciſſitude of the Seaſons.

GOD, creator and governor of the univerſe, great and glorious are thy works, juſt and gracious all thy ways, all tend to the perfection and happineſs of thy creatures as to their common centre. This is loudly proclaimed to us by both heaven and earth, by the whole œconomy of nature. Oh that we did but always attend to their voice, and thence learn wiſdom and acquieſcence! Yes, thou, Firſt, Almighty, Incomprehenſible, thou haſt appointed the ſun and the earth their ſtation, their motion, their mutual relations, they are guided and governed in their courſe by thee, thou makeſt the light and the darkneſs, thou cauſeſt the night to ſucceed the day and the ſeaſons of the year to follow each other; and by theſe regulations thou diffuſeſt life and refreſhment and joy over all the inhabitants of the earth, more life, more refreſhment and joy, than would have been poſſible by any other conſtitution! Praiſed be thy

thy fatherly kindneſs, which is continually providing for us and for all, doing good to us at all times and in all reſpects, and by all means promoting our preſervation, our pleaſure and our happineſs! It is well for us that we are not the work of chance, but thy creatures and children, that we are not left to ourſelves and our own underſtanding, but are under thy inſpection and government, under the inſpection and government of the Allwiſe, and Allgracious! How calmly may we now behold the various phænomena and revolutions in nature, how undiſmayed contemplate the diverſe viciſſitudes and the ſtriking caducity of all outward earthly things, how compoſedly feel even our own weakneſs and frailty and our gradual declenſion to the end of our preſent ſtate, ſince we know that all this enſues according to thy will, in conformity to the laws of the greateſt poſſible perfection, and that thy will, that thy laws are pure wiſdom and benignity! Yes, Lord, gladly will we ſubmit to be guided and governed by thee; gladly acquieſce in all thy diſpenſations; cheerfully enjoy whatever thou granteſt us to enjoy; willingly bear and forbear, ſolely in regard to our beſt intereſts, whatever thou enjoineſt us to bear and to forbear, and with alacrity do that which thou commandeſt us to do! Confirm us in theſe diſpoſitions, Father of mercies, and grant that by them we may perpetually become more contented and accompliſhed. Bleſs to that end even the meditations in which we are

now purpoſing to engage, and hearken to our prayer through Jeſus Chriſt, our lord, in whoſe name and words we farther addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

GEN. viii. 22.

While the earth remaineth, ſeed time and harveſt, and cold and heat, and ſummer and winter, and day and night ſhall not ceaſe.

MANKIND are ſometimes weak and fooliſh enough to complain of ſeveral particulars in the conſtitution of nature, to call in queſtion the wiſdom of them, and even to imagine that they could have ordered things better. Nothing is ſafe from their cenſure. Man, the animals, the plants; their nature, their relative ſituations, their condition, their fates and fortunes; the outward figure, the inward contexture of the earth, its connection with other orbs; every thing furniſhes them with matter for querulous animadverſion. This weakneſs and folly is not unfrequently exhibited in regard to the viciſſitude of the ſeaſons. No ſooner does any one ſuffer in ſome degree by it, no ſooner does he experience any ſlight inconvenience from it, but he immediately conceives that the preſent is not the beſt conſtitution of things, and wiſhes that it could be altered. One eternal ſpring, a ſettled, uniform, genial temperature of air, the ground perpetually adorned with flowers and

and teeming with ſucceſſive fruits: what charming pictures, what flattering dreams to men who have more ſenſibility than reflection, hearken more to the imagination than to the underſtanding! The wiſe man ſees the vanity, the inconſiſtency of ſuch ideas and wiſhes, would be aſhamed of ever ſeriouſly entertaining them, and likewiſe in this inſtance reveres with inward conviction the conſummate wiſdom and benignity of the ruler of the world. To him each ſeaſon is welcome, each gladſome, each inſtructive, each a manifeſt proof of the providence of his heavenly father; for he conſiders them all in their connection together, and in their tendency to the preſervation and to the benefit of the whole. And ſo, my pious hearers, would I teach you alſo to conſider them and thereby promote your ſatisfaction as well as your intrinſic perfection.

How comfortable to the patriarchs, who had eſcaped the great deluge, muſt the aſſurance of God in our text have been: while the earth remaineth, ſeed time and harveſt, and cold and heat, and ſummer and winter, and day and night ſhall not ceaſe. Conſolatory to them muſt it have been, when in the train of dark and heavy ſtorms that threatened them with freſh inundations, they perceived the rainbow in the clouds of heaven, and ſaw in it the token and pledge of that divine aſſurance. Even to us, my dear friends, ſhould the regular, uninterrupted viciſſitude of the ſeaſons be a grateful teſtimony of the continued

providence of God and his ſuperintendance over the events and fortunes of the world and of mankind! Allow me in this view to enter into a few curſory conſiderations with you upon it, and impart to you the thoughts and ſenſations which I recently experienced on beholding the tranſition of nature from the finer to the ruder ſeaſon of the year.

Each of the ſeaſons is alike neceſſary to the preſervation and the welfare of the whole; each is inſeparably connected with the reſt; each has its peculiar beauties and pleaſures; each is in ſhort inſtructive. Four ideas which repreſent to us the viciſſitude of the ſeaſons in its proper point of view.

Each of the ſeaſons, I ſay, is alike neceſſary to the preſervation and the welfare of the whole. Only by their viciſſitude and their regular ſucceſſion can the greateſt poſſible ſum of life, of fertility and joy be produced on the earth. Only by means thereof could the ſeveral parts of it be inhabited, cultivated, turned to profit, and embelliſhed with all kinds of plants, herbs and fruits; by its means alone can the ſeveral ſpecies and claſſes of creatures that live and rejoice in life be produced and nouriſhed on this our place of abode. Deprive the globe of its obliquity towards the ſun and its circuit about it, and thus do away the viciſſitude of the ſeaſons: what a ſepulchre will you open to thouſands and thouſands of millions of beings that now live and are capable of happineſs! Into what a prodigious, manleſs, lifeleſs, joyleſs dreary

dreary ſcene of deſolation would ye convert a vaſt proportion of it! And could ye be ſo ſelfiſh, ſo inſenſible as to wiſh to live in a paradiſe, where one eternal ſpring prevailed, in order to avoid a few ſlight inconveniences, which ye could not otherwiſe avoid than by the demolition of a conſiderable portion of your fellow-creatures! Would ye be ſo uncharitable as not to grant to your kindred and relatives, what ye yourſelves have enjoyed, and what will ſo quickly return to you again! And conſider what a puniſhment ye would thus inflict upon yourſelves. How many advantages and goods, how many of the accommodations which ye now enjoy, muſt ye forego! How many ſources of pleaſure and ſatisfaction would ye thus foreclose to yourſelves, which now flow to you on all ſides and from the remoteſt regions of the earth! No, adopt the diſpoſition of your father in heaven, who gives and grants being and life to whatever can be and live, who lets his family on earth extend as far as poſſible, provides for all his offspring, gladdens all, ſheds his fertilizing and refreſhing ſhowers on the whole ſurface of the earth, and thus promotes the welfare of each as well as that of the whole!

Again: every ſeaſon is inſeparably connected with the reſt. Each is a conſequence and effect of the preceding, and the preparative and cauſe of the next in rotation. Like ſiſters they take each other by the hand, mutually lend each other their graces and talents, alleviate to each other their offices and hard-

ſhips; and the tranſition from one to the other is gradual, gentle, imperceptible, and ſo qualified, that we are never deficient in time and opportunity either for profiting by the advantages of the one or protecting ourſelves againſt the inconveniences of the other. After the winter's cold we are cheered and revived by the lenient breath of ſpring, which prepares us for the heat of ſummer, and this loſes itſelf gradually in the cooler days of autumn which diſpoſe us again to bear intenſer cold. Each ſeaſon at the ſame time has its peculiar deſtination and its particular uſe. As they uninterruptedly follow on each other, ſo likewiſe follow ſowing and reaping, bloſſom and fruit, labour and reſt, exertion and recreation of the forces of nature and mankind, hope and fear in alternate ſucceſſion. It is one compact revolving chain of cauſes and effects, of which not a ſingle link could be impaired or broken, without weakening or deſtroying the whole. And this very viciſſitude, this ſucceſſion of the ſeaſons is what enhances the value of each; increaſing our ſenſibility to the pleaſures and benefits that each procures; cauſing us doubly to enjoy it, in the expectation as well as in the reality; thereby beſtowing on them charms ever new, and never allowing them to prove inſipid either by their uniformity or by their uninterrupted continuance.

To proceed. Every ſeaſon has its peculiar beauties and pleaſures. If the ſpring preſents us as it were with a new creation, adorned with youthful grace

grace and beauty, where everything around us is ſtirring, all is alive and in motion, all variouſly exulting in its exiſtence and in its life and all joyouſly travelling its appointed journey; if the ſummer diſplays to us the whole force of active, of inceſſantly, inexhauſtibly induſtrious nature and its almighty author and preſerver, and all appears in its complete magnificence, in its plenitude of vigour and perfection, and all glides round us in bright, unclouded ſunſhine: the later ſeaſon mitigates the dazzling blaze, more variouſly blends and ſoftens the tints of nature, lowers the loud ſonorous pitch of ſportive joy to leſs vociferous, though not leſs pleaſing emotions, delights us with the charming view of ripened fruits ſolliciting our taſte from the different trees that obſequiouſly bend their loaded branches to our reach, and inſenſibly inſpires us with greater ſeriouſneſs, a ſerenity and compoſure propitious to reflection, ſometimes with a pleaſing melancholy which attunes our ſouls to nobler, purer joys, and enables us to derive laſting benefits from thoſe livelier pleaſures of ſenſe which we have recently enjoyed. And then comes the greater repoſe and ſtillneſs of the winter, which draws us nearer together, admoniſhes us to employ our recruited forces in uſeful occupations, enables us cheerfully to regale upon the gathered fruits at the convivial board or round the genial hearth, affords the countryman relaxation and repoſe from his toilſome labours, and diſcloſes to us all no leſs various than abundant ſources of

domeſtic and ſocial ſatisfactions and delights! And which of all theſe kinds of beauties and pleaſures, of benefits and advantages ſhould we be willing to relinquiſh my pious hearers? Which could we ſpare without ſuffering great detriment and loſs? Which would not loſe much of its value by the want of the others? No, gladly and gratefully, Father of Men, gladly and gratefully will we hail the return of every ſeaſon, and accept from thy bounteous hand its peculiar beauties and pleaſures, revere thy wiſdom and bounty in each, and acknowledge, with joy acknowledge every moment of our lives, that thy wiſdom is unerring, thy kindneſs inexhauſtible, that all thy ordinances and inſtitutions are blameleſs and unimproveable!

Every ſeaſon is laſtly inſtructive. Each of them may be to us a ſchool of wiſdom and virtue; each of them is adapted to inſpire us with thoughts and emotions that lift us above the objects of ſenſe, that raiſe us to God, that inform us of our preſent and future deſtination and may in various ways be promotive of our ſpiritual perfection and permanent happineſs. Viſible and inviſible objects are in cloſe correſpondence, they relate to one another, the former are types of the latter, by thoſe the deity reveals to us his purpoſes in regard to theſe. All nature addreſſes us in the name of its creator and publiſhes to us his mandates and deſigns. Happy they who liſten to her voice, and profit by it to their information and improvement! I have endeavoured on former occaſions

occaſions to call your attention to the voice of beautiful nature, to the voice of the ſpring. Permit me now to report to you ſome of the ſuggeſtions and remonſtrances which in the preſent declining autumn, though on a tolerably bright and pleaſant day, I ſeemed to learn from her mouth.

My life, ſay the poets, my life is a falling leaf. Never do I feel the truth, the beauty, the force of this metaphor more emphatically than when, walking at the latter end of autumn in the ſilent avenue, I ſee the foreſt, ſtill refulgent with the faint radiance of the ſun, on all ſides ſhedding its withered foliage. One moment the leaf ſtill adheres to the bough, ſtill ſucks ſome moiſture from its vital ſource; the next this vital ſource is dry, the power to draw from it is gone, it is looſened, parted from it, and drops on the ground to which it was to reſtore its duſt. Thus to-day the tie between our ſpirit and our body is ſtill tenacious of its truſt; we ſtill adhere to our friends and favourites, to ſociety, to viſible objects by a thouſand and a thouſand, more or leſs ſenſible, ſtronger or weaker threads: and to-morrow this tie is diſſolved, this coheſion ceaſes, all viſible objects diſappear to our eyes, our body returns to its parent earth, and our ſpirit enters the unſeen world, into new connections, which are veiled from us at preſent by impenetrable darkneſs. Imbibe theſe leſſons of fading, withering nature, let this image of thy own fragility be often preſent to thy mind, o thou, who wantonly preſumeſt on thy faculties and thy life, who

who art buſily employed in laying extenſive plans for the future, and reckoneſt upon them as though thou wer' not mortal, who boaſteſt thyſelf of the morrow, of a ſeries of years, as though they were in thy power. Go, take a turn in yonder grove, look for the leaves, which even yeſterday, perhaps to-day ſtill adorned their parent trees, and if thou findeſt them no more, if faded and dry they are wafted in heaps beneath thy feet, turn thy thoughts inward and ſay: this may to-morrow, may even to-day be my fate, my life is a falling leaf!

If again I look at the difference, the variety, the beauty, the innumerable tints and hues of the withering and dying leaves, and the captivating but awful ſcene my eye ſurveys, I cannot fail of making this reflection: how beautiful is nature even in decay and death! What a luſtre is ſpread over the honours of her age! — And when I conſider the gradual changes that now come on, how gentle methinks is the tranſition from life to death! How gentle if nature be not diſturbed either in the one or the other, but is left to herſelf and can follow the laws preſcribed to her by the creator! — And why ſhould not alſo man be able even in death to maintain his dignity by diffuſing light and joy around him? Though the expreſſion of dying well, may be often abuſed, it may nevertheleſs be applied with truth. Yes, if I am arrived at the term of an honourably finiſhed career; If I can look back on many good actions, and on a more plentiful ſowing for

for the future; if I die with the ſoothing recollection of the many innocent and generous ſatisfactions I have enjoyed, on time and abilities properly uſed, in the ſure and certain expectation of a better everlaſting life; if whether living or dying I acquieſce in the decrees of God, and revere them as the decrees of the wiſeſt, the tendereſt father: what is there terrible in ſuch a death? Nay, rather how pleaſant muſt ſuch a diſſolution be, how bright, how brilliant the laſt moments of a man thus dying! And muſt not the tranſition from ſuch a life to ſuch a death, the departure of ſuch a ſoul from its clay-built tenement be no leſs gentle than the ſeparation of the withered leaf from its parent bough? Yes, live, o man, in conformity with thy nature and the ends for which thou waſt created; waſte and abridge not thy life in folly, or by ſin; uſe and enjoy it with prudent moderation; mark it with many a good deed; ornament it with the rich flowers and fruits of wiſdom and virtue: ſo ſhall the act of dying never be diſtreſſing to thee, it will be a pleaſant paſſage into life eternal.

Yet more. Do I perceive in the forſaken grove, now ſingle leaves gently fall from their heights, and ſlowly flutter in circling eddies to the ground, now whole hoſts of them ſhaken by a ſtronger agitation of the air, break looſe and preſs in a more rapid deſcent to the earth, they call to me now in ſofter then in louder accents: thus falls one of you ſlowly and unobſerved and lays him ſoftly and quietly in the

the lap of earth, while others are violently and ſuddenly carried off by raging ſtorms and plunged into the yawning grave; but there the duſt of one mingles with the duſt of the other, both that and theſe have reached their term, have fulfilled their deſtinies, and it is not the manner how they left the world, but what they have tranſacted in it, the manner how they filled their poſt, that decides their lot. Happy he, who is always ready for his departure, always prepared to give up the account that follows it, he is and continues happy and his end is the commencement of ſtill greater felicity, whether death approach him with ſlow and ſilent ſtep, or hurry him unexpectedly and rapidly from the land of the living!

The latter days of autumn yield me more inſtruction ſtill. Here I behold the lately robuſt and ſpreading tree, which gave harbour and nouriſhment to the choriſters of the woods, and afforded ſhade and refreſhment to the weary traveller, entirely ſtripped of its leaves, expoſed to the attacks of the inclement ſeaſon, a lamentable ſport to the raging winds, perhaps ſoon to become a prey to their fury. It now no longer can afford either ſuſtenance or ſhelter to others, its vital ſap as it were dried up, is often on the brink of total extinction, the extremities of its boughs and twigs already dead, and is itſelf in want of that protection which it lately lent to others. What a lively, ſpeaking emblem of the laſt ſtage of mortal man! Separated from the friends

of

of his youth, from his fellow travellers in the ſummer of life, he there ſtands deſolate and forlorn, emaciated by hard labour, ſometimes with the additional burden of ſorrow and care, unable to ſerve and aſſiſt others, he wants himſelf every ſort of relief and kindneſs from them, can make no reſiſtance to adverſity, bends timid and trembling to every ruder guſt of fortune, and is always ripe and mellow enough to be cruſhed under every ſtroke of affliction. No, to wiſh for ſuch a prolongation of life is weakneſs, but it is no leſs a weakneſs anxiouſly to dread it. That is the wiſh of a ſoul entirely devoted to the objects of ſenſe and cleaving to the ground; this the dread of a dejected mind bereft of reliance on God and his gracious ſupport, and both are degrading and diſgraceful to the man. No, this alone is wiſdom, calmly to reſign the diſpenſation of life and death to him who has the command of both, and to accept them both from his hand in full aſſurance that both are nothing but means and ways to happineſs. This alone is wiſdom, ſo to employ the beſt of our years and abilities in works of uſefulneſs and beneficence, and in the ſpring and ſummer of our lives to effect ſo much good, to diſſeminate ſo much ſatisfaction and pleaſure around us, that in our advanced years and with exhauſted powers we may cheerfully accept the reward of our ſervices done to mankind and be aſſured that it is conferred upon us by true gratitude and love. —

If, in concluſion, my pious hearers, the ſpring and

and the ſummer incite us to activity, to generally uſeful induſtry, the unabated application of our faculties in promoting the welfare of all that lives, and particularly of our brethren; if they repreſent to us life, joy and happineſs, as the final aim of all the decrees and arrangements of heaven, and call upon us to contribute as much as in us lies to that end; if they preach to us order, harmony, induſtry, diligence, as the immutable laws of nature and humanity: the later ſeaſon ſtrikingly reminds us of the fragility and fugaciouſneſs of our life, of the inconſtancy and viciſſitude of all that we here poſſeſs, enjoy, undertake of beautiful and good; of the various and ſignal transformations brought about with us in death, on which however, as in nature, not total extinction, but renovated, ſuperior life, greater activity and happineſs, will enſue. Let us hearken to the voice of nature, my dear friends, and apply her ſalutary inſtructions to our improvement; let us everywhere inveſtigate the traces of a wiſe and benign providence, and with childlike docility eagerly attend to every ſuggeſtion of the creator and ruler of the univerſe: thus ſhall we learn wiſdom from the viciſſitude of the ſeaſons, and find in it not only no cauſe of complaint, but the ſtrongeſt reaſons for content and ſatisfaction. Thus may all of us who are ſenſible to the charm of nature's works, hold converſe with the deity himſelf, grow day by day familiar with his conceptions, act upon his plan, and form the reliſh of our ſouls to his.

SERMON XVII.

God's Thoughts and Ways are not the Thoughts and Ways of Man.

GOD, Eternal, Infinite, Firſt and Laſt, Supreme, Allperfect, who dwelleſt in inacceſſible light, whom no mortal has ever ſeen or can ſee, what abyſſes yawn before us, in what clouds and darkneſs are we involved, when we turn our thoughts on thee, when we ſtrive to approach thee, when we preſume to caſt a look into the ſecrets of thy decrees, into the ways of thy all encircling providence and government! How ſenſibly we at ſuch times feel our ignorance and our imbecility! How ſoon we loſe ſight of ourſelves and all that ſurrounds us. God, in profound humility the ſublimeſt ſpirit adores thee as the Incomprehenſible, as the Unſearchable; and we, infants, we, who adhere to the earth, and are more fleſh than ſpirit, ſhall we not fall proſtrate on

the earth before thee, ſhall not the ſentiment of thy infinite grandeur and our inſignificance overwhelm us with a ſacred awe whenever we meditate on thee, on thee, the eternal ſource of all that is and ever will be, on thee, the Potentate, the Almighty, the Onlywiſe, the Creator, the Sovereign and Ruler of all times and all worlds. Yes, we feel the immenſe diſtance that is between thee and us, feel that thou art all in all, and how vain and impotent we are, and penetrated by this ſentiment we adore thee in the profoundeſt reverence, as men, as the offspring of the duſt are able to adore thee. Oh that this ſenſation might never entirely forſake us! Might we never be unmindful of thy greatneſs and our nullity! Never forget who thou art and who we are! Never forget, how far thy thoughts and ways are above our thoughts and ways! In what a totally different light would all thy regulations and inſtitutions then appear to us! With what obedience ſhould we then revere thy commands! With what reſignation and confidence ſubmit to all thy diſpenſations! How much more equitably ſhould we judge of thy decrees and of thy doings! God, do thou thyſelf raiſe and ſtrengthen our minds now that we are going to meditate on theſe exalted objects. Let a ray of thy glory illumine the night that ſtill ſurrounds us. Teach us as truly and as reverentially to conceive and judge of thy thoughts and ways as they can be conceived and judged of by children of men. We implore it of thee as votaries of thy

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ſon Jeſus, our ſaviour, and addreſs thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

ISAIAH, lv. 8, 9.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

NEVER, my devout audience, never does man betray more weakneſs, never is he in greater jeopardy of falling into the groſſeſt errors, never is he guilty of more ridiculous vanity, of more culpable perverſeneſs, than when he makes his thoughts, his judgments, his views, his procedure a ſtandard for the thoughts, the judgments, the views, the procedure of the Almighty, the Eternal and Infinite, the ſupremely perfect mind. And how often notwithſtanding is he guilty of this folly! How frequently does he not endue the ſupreme being with his limitations, his weakneſſes, his paſſions! How often does it ſurpriſe and perplex him, that the world, that the fortunes of himſelf and his brethren are not regulated in ſuch a manner, as he thinks juſt and proper! How frequently does he require, expect, demand certain things unconditionally of God, becauſe they to him ſeem fit and neceſſary, and then ſurrender himſelf to murmurs and diſcon-

tent, if they do not fall out exactly as he had determined they ſhould! How frequently does he find fault with the regulations, the diſpenſations of the Allwiſe, becauſe they coincide not with the plans which he has chalked out, becauſe inſtead of being ſquared by the rules of his human, narrow and fallible way of thinking, they are r eu lated by the laws of infallible wiſdom and infinite love! Hear ye, who are ſo prone to forget the greatneſs of God and your nullity, and thus are liable to fall into ſuch deviations, what the Lord himſelf declares to you by his prophet in our text, and learn from thence to think and judge more humbly. My thoughts, ſays God, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Oh might this grand, this important truth be ever preſent to our minds, might it be the leading principle of all our thoughts and determinations on matters of divine concern, the conſtant rule of our deportment! Come then, my pious hearers, let us at preſent beſtow our whole attention on it, and deeply engrave it in our hearts. To this end we will on one hand inquire, how and wherein the thoughts and ways of God are different from our's; and on the other hand examine, what obligations we thence lie under in regard to our judgments and our conduct.

God's thoughts, my dear friends, God's thoughts — what an unſearchable abyſs to the human intellect!

Who can form the leaſt idea of the manner how God thinks! Is our own faculty of thinking an unfathomable myſtery to us! Are we loſt even in the labyrinth of our own thoughts! Do we at all underſtand how one thought ariſes, how one thought begets another, how one is connected with another, how they all ſubſiſt together, ſucceed each other; how they congregate, accumulate, ſettle, wax faint and obſcure, brighten up, retreat, preſs forward in our mind; how they become judgments, principles, determinations, motives to numberleſs different actions; how they create in us deſire or averſion, pleaſure or pain, ecſtatic joy or agonizing torment; how they ſet us and through us ſo many other things in motion and activity! And how ſhould we be able to fathom, aſcertain the manner how God thinks? No, but this we know, that his thoughts are not our thoughts, that his mode of thinking is not our's, that the ſeveral limitations and effects of our apprehenſion muſt be far from him. But this we know, that in him, the conſummately perfect mind, no ſuch toilſome generation, no ſuch tedious, oft interrupted progreſs, no ſuch mixture of light and darkneſs, of certainty and doubt, of truth and error can have place, as is in our and more or leſs in every created intellect. No, to him muſt all appear at once, all immediately, all in the brighteſt luſtre, in the moſt natural order and connection, without the leaſt pains or exertion. In his infinite intellect muſt be pure light, unclouded truth, pure infallible

certainty. His ideas muſt comprehend with equal perſpicuity all worlds, all æras, all the poſſible, all the actual, the ſmall as well as the great, the courſe of the planets and the fall of the withered leaf, the intellectual ſyſtem of the foremoſt of his heavenly miniſters and the inviſible motion of every animated and inanimate atom. This we learn from reaſon, this we are taught by ſcripture, of this the conception of a firſt, eternal, all animating and ruling cauſe, the conception of the moſt perfect mind, the father of ſpirits, allows us not to entertain a doubt. But at preſent we are encompaſſed by impenetrable ſhades, that conceal the Infinite, the Incomprehenſible from our prying eyes. Yes, his thoughts are not our thoughts, they are as far ſuperior to our's as the heavens are higher than the earth. If we are humiliated by this truth, if it oblige us to feel our abſolute nullity, it likewiſe raiſes and ſooths us again, by calling us to admire and adore an intelligence, incapable of error, of weakneſs, that ſurveys all, embraces all, beholds and judges all according to truth, that never needs to alter its plans and never can fail of its deſigns.

And the ways of God, my dear friends! How far are they too above our ways! How different is his mode of proceeding from ours! What quite other means he uſes to attain his ends, than we? How far his adminiſtration differs from the adminiſtration of the wiſeſt and beſt of earthly monarchs! This is a neceſſary conſequence of his infinite intel-

ligence. His ways are the exhibitions, the effects of his thoughts. If the former be incomprehenſible to us, the latter muſt likewiſe be very often inſcrutable. By ſome of his ways however he reveals himſelf to us, and from what we know and ſee of them, we may form many juſt concluſions concerning w at in regard to them is concealed from us. At leaſt we ſee and know enough of them, for acknowledging from the fulleſt conviction, that his ways as well as his thoughts are not our ways and thoughts, but are infinitely above them, and in more than one reſpect totally different from them.

The following conſiderations will place this difference in a more perſpicuous point of view.

Our thoughts and ways are firſt greatly contracted by ſpace or the compaſs and ſcope of objects. Our horizon, our ſphere of knowledge, our ſphere of action have very narrow bounds which we cannot exceed. That which we can ſee, apprehend, underſtand, which we can think and judge of, is, in compariſon with what we cannot ſee, not apprehend, not know, on which we cannot think, of which we cannot judge, an imperceptibly ſmall part of the whole. The plans that we form, the regulations and inſtitutions that we adopt, the ſchemes we purſue, the outward alterations that we effect, for the moſt part extend no farther than to the objects lying neareſt to us, which we can lay hold of as it were with our hands, or reach with our eyes; and even though they embraced whole countries, whole kingdoms, how little, how confined would they ſtill

be! What we know, and what we do, is all piece-work; relates only to ſingle, detached parts of the whole, and their connection with it is in the generality of inſtances abſolutely hidden from us. We ſee, we apprehend, we treat things in general, only as they are in the abſtract, but not as parts of an immenſe, compact whole, not as links of one unbroken and infinitely extending chain of cauſes and effects. How can it be otherwiſe, than that we very frequently entertain wrong notions, judge partially and erroneouſly, form imprudent, childiſh plans, purſue incompatible objects, chuſe means totally unſuitable to their attainment, employ our faculties in vain or injuriouſly, and therefore find ourſelves deceived in our expectations! — How perfectly different muſt it be with God's thoughts and ways, how far muſt they be ſuperior to our's! He, the Omniſcient, the Creator and Ruler of the univerſe, ſurveys all, comprehends all, the great as well as the little, the whole as well as the part. He judges, he treats everything according to its various and numberleſs combinations with all other things, according to the influence it has on the remoteſt as well as on the neareſt part of his immenſe domain. All his views extend to the whole. All his regulations and inſtitutions tend to the preſervation, to the beauty, to the perfection of the whole. The whole vaſt inconceivable hoſt of his lifeleſs and living creatures is ever preſent to his all-ſeeing eye, and every one of them is and effects that which it can and is deſigned to be and to effect. And his power is infinite, the

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ſeveral energies and means, whereby his views are to be attained, are in his hand and can never fail of their ultimate aim. But how often for that reaſon muſt his thoughts and ways be inconceivable to us! How often muſt that which he holds to be right and fit appear to us wrong and improper! Yes, on a thouſand occaſions we call that misfortune and calamity, which in its combination with the whole is bleſſing and bounty; and think we ſee diſorder and ruin, where to him who contemplates objects from a higher point of view, the faireſt order and ſymmetry prevail. We here expect from ſome affair, from ſome enterpriſe various and extenſive utility, and the Omniſcient ſees, that it would there cauſe far greater miſchief, and defeats our plans. We care for ourſelves and ſome few perſons who concern us nearly, and our heavenly father cares for his whole innumerable family in heaven and on earth. If we ſometimes from ſelf-love and partiality, or in conſequence of our contracted views, prefer the near to the diſtant, the unimportant to the important, the known to the unknown, a ſmall part to the whole; to him all is near, all accurately known, all equally important, equally valuable, and he treats all agreeably to its nature, and to the place it occupies in his kingdom, in the chain of things.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways, for our thoughts and ways are ſecondly almoſt always confined to the preſent, and his thoughts and ways embrace the paſt, the preſent

and the future with equal certainty and preciſion. But little of what is paſt has ever been known to us, and the remoter futurity is utterly hid from our eyes. Neither the paſt nor the future can therefore in moſt caſes have any great influence on our judgment, on our projects, on our actions. We therefore uſually confine ourſelves to the preſent, at moſt to the few hours and moments, which compoſe the ſum of human life on earth. We think, we judge, we determine, we act according to what is and happens now, but not according to what will be and happen in all future times. If we in our judgments and actions take the conſequences of things into conſideration, they are generally but the neareſt, never thoſe that will only enſue ſome thouſands of years hence, not till after whole ages of the world have elapſed; and even though theſe ſhould lightly float as it were before us in the moment of deep reflection, we deſcry them only at a diſtance, in the back ground, enveloped in clouds and darkneſs. Follow the viewleſs chain of cauſes and effects with ever ſuch ſtrict attention, how quickly will ye loſe ſight of it! So little are we able to ſurvey the whole in point of ſpace, juſt as little can we apprehend it in point of time. — But to the Eternal, the Omniſcient, this is poſſible, this he does. To his unbounded intellect the paſt and the future preſent themſelves in the ſame reſplendent light, wherein he beholds the preſent. Before him lies the whole immenſe ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects, whatever has

has happened and will happen from eternity to eternity in all ages, in all worlds, in all their contemporary and ſucceſſive connection, without any confuſion, in the utmoſt preciſion! And hereon are grounded his thoughts and ways, his judgments, his regulations, his diſpenſations, all that he appoints, and does! At preſent he permits in the natural or in the moral world a thouſand things to happen or not to happen, which are to be only grounds and occaſions to far diſtant events and revolutions. At preſent he ſets a thouſand things and perſons, whole nations and kingdoms in motion and activity, in order to prepare the way to certain purpoſes, which are only then to be attained, when theſe things, theſe perſons, theſe nations and kingdoms are no more. At preſent he permits the ignorant, the wicked man to riſe into conſequence, beſtows on him riches and power and authority, in order that ſome one of his late deſcendants may be able to undertake and achieve, what he in his ſtation and in his time ſhould undertake and achieve. At preſent he permits the intelligent and good man to loſe his property or his conſequence and his honours, in order leſt ſome one of his progeny yet unborn ſhould abuſe them to the corruption of his brother. At preſent he permits the innocent man to ſuffer as ſuch, that hereafter he may not ſuffer as a malefactor. At preſent he inflicts particular calamities on perſons and nations, that in proceſs of time they may not experience ſtill more grievous calamities,

calamities, or be forced to forego far greater advantages that are deſigned to ſpring out of them. And thus it is that the Omniſcient ſees always the future in the preſent, the fruit in the bud, the effects and conſequences in the cauſe, the greater good in the leſſer evil; and his thoughts and ways comprehend all, combine all, extend to all times and eternities. How far, how infinitely far then muſt they be above our thoughts and ways, how often muſt they be inconceivable and inſcrutable to us!

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways, for our thoughts and ways are thirdly far more confined to the actual than to the poſſible, and muſt in moſt inſtances be regulated by that, becauſe this is concealed from us. We apprehend and treat objects according to what they are or appear to be; at times we conceive particular caſes, where they might be and become otherwiſe; but never can we apprehend them in every poſſible combination with all other objects, and judge and treat them accordingly. And thence it ariſes that our judgments are ſo often falſe, our wiſhes ſo often prepoſterous, our projects and actions ſo often imprudent, and our views and expectations ſo fallacious. We provide, for inſtance, for our children, for our poſterity, accumulate property for them, deſign them for ſome particular profeſſion, endeavour to fit them for certain employments, place them in certain connections, exert our intereſt in procuring certain offices and poſts for them; but we never perfectly

perfectly know beforehand, whether riches or poverty, this or another condition of life, theſe or other connections, this or another poſt would be moſt advantageous to them, we can never with entire ſecurity govern ourſelves by what in the contrary caſe they would be and do and afford or not. And this is the reaſon that our wiſeſt plans are ſo ſeldom completely executed, and our beſt deſigns ſo often fruſtrated. — Totally different is it with God's thoughts and ways, my dear friends. They have the poſſible as well as the actual for their baſis. He ſees both with equal perſpicuity and with equal certainty. If he knows every ſubject exactly as it is, he likewiſe knows how it would be in every other inſtance, in every other connection, in every other poſition. And this is the very rule, o man, by which God fixes thy deſtinies and the deſtinies of all creatures and worlds, all with the utmoſt wiſdom and benignity, but indeed very frequently ſo as to aſtoniſh thee as ſeeming to be at enmity with the rules of wiſdom and benignity. Thou, for example, aſpireſt to ſome office, ſome poſt of honour, ſome connection, which thou muſt neceſſarily hold to be good, honourable, profitable. But thy endeavours were fruitleſs, thy hopes were blaſted, that connection was not brought about, that dignity adorns another, that place fell not to thy portion; and thereby perhaps in thy opinion thou haſt ſuffered an irreparable loſs. But God, who conducts thy deſtinies, ſaw the future poſſible conſequences of this

this change in thy ſituation; he ſaw that thou wert not qualified for that office, that thou wouldſt not have fulfilled the duties of it, not endured the difficulties and burdens belonging to it, that thou wouldſt not ſupport that dignity with honour, and wouldſt not derive from that connection thoſe advantages which thou hadſt promiſed thyſelf from it; he ſaw that that poſt, that dignity, that connection, would exclude and debar thee from ſome other poſt, or dignity or connection, far more ſuited to thee, and where thou mighteſt far better promote thy own welfare and that of thy brethren; and therefore he permitted thy expectations to fail thee, therefore he ſuffered thee to feel at preſent the pangs of diſappointment, in order to preſerve thee in future from the far more agonizing pangs of ſelf-accuſation and remorſe. And how far, my dear friends, in a thouſand ſimilar inſtances, muſt God's thoughts and ways be higher than our's and different from them, ſince his infinite mind conceives as clearly and certainly what in every poſſible caſe will be and happen, as what at preſent actually is and happens!

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways, for our thoughts and ways are fourthly confined by certain laws of thought and conduct, which we neither can nor ought to tranſgreſs. We muſt ſo conceive of every matter as it ſhews itſelf in relation to our organs of ſenſe, or to our antecedent experiences and perceptions; ſo judge of every matter as a human mind in this ſituation

ſituation and combination of things can judge of it; and in every caſe do that which God has commanded us to do, without ever ſuffering ourſelves to be diſturbed by the poſſibility or probability, that perhaps here or there, now or then the reverſe thereof might be better and more ſalutary. Whereas God's thoughts and ways have no other laws than his infinite, all encircling mind, than his ſupreme immutable perfection. To him everything appears as it abſolutely is; his judgment is never partial; poſſibility, probability, certainty ſhew themſelves to him in the ſame infallible, unclouded light. His thoughts and ways extend therefore with the ſame ſecurity and certainty to evil as to good; and how far muſt they particularly in regard to the former be higher than our's and different from them! — We ought never to permit the evil, which we may prevent, that good may ariſe from it, becauſe we never can foreſee with certainty, whether this good will really ariſe from it and outweigh the evil or not, and becauſe we in regard to the combination of the whole ſhould only obey, not regulate and govern. If we ſee an innocent man ſuffer, and we can deliver him, it is our indiſpenſable duty ſo to do, although perhaps the continuance of his ſufferings would be extremely beneficial to him and to others. Is the votary of truth and virtue perſecuted, is he in danger of being cruſhed and made away with; it is our indiſpenſable duty to intereſt ourſelves in his behalf as much as ever we can, and to uſe every effort to preſerve

preſerve a life ſo valuable to ſociety, though perhaps his death might prove even more beneficial to his brethren than his life. But thus needs not God, the Omniſcient, to act, he, who foreſees all the conſequences of what now happens, with the ſame certainty, as the matter of the tranſaction itſelf, from which they flow. He may permit evil, becauſe the evil with all its effects remains conſtantly in his power, becauſe it can proceed no farther, not occaſion more evil, than it ſhould proceed and occaſion, and becauſe he is ſure of the good reſult thereof. Thus he ſees the innocent Joſeph hated, perſecuted by his envious brethren, ſees him in their power, and reſcues him not out of their hands. We, my dear friends, muſt poſitively have done it, for we ſhould have ſeen nothing in the matter but ſuffering innocence. We ſhould have been bound to ward off the firſt attacks of the envy and malice of his brethren, becauſe it would not have lain with us to ſtop their progreſs, and to avert their murderous intentions. But God ſaw in the perſon of this guiltleſs ſufferer the future preſerver of his whole family, the deliverer of millions of individuals, the patriarch of a great nation; and all the thoughts, all the plots, all the motions of his enemies, all outward circumſtances were ſo completely under his controul, that he could check and alter them according to his good pleaſure. — Thus God ſaw the Holy-one, the Juſt, his ſon Jeſus, the teacher of truth, the improver of his contemporaries, the reliever

reliever and comforter of ſo many poor and wretched and deſolate in the power of his cruel and implacable enemies, and prevented them not from ill-treating, from condemning, from crucifying and from ſlaying him. And what man, who knew his innocence, and had the ſentiments of humanity in his breaſt, and the force of a man in his hands, could there without a crime have calmly left malice to purſue its courſe and remained an idle, inactive ſpectator of the horrid ſcene? But God, the Omniſcient, allowed it to happen, and allowed it with the moſt perfect holineſs to happen, for he ſaw in the afflictions of this innocent ſufferer the infallible means of preventing far greater evils, and of elevating the ſufferer himſelf to far greater perfection and glory; he ſaw the conſolation, the compoſure, the hope, which all future generations of men would thence derive; he ſaw in the magnanimous death of his favourite the life of the world. How far, my dear friends, how far were likewiſe here God's thoughts and ways ſuperior to ours? And as God in both theſe inſtances thought and acted, ſo he thinks and acts in numberleſs others, which eſcape our knowledge and obſervation. As he in each of theſe caſes produced light out of darkneſs and made calamity a ſource of bleſſing, ſo he ſtill continues to do, though we very often perceive nought but darkneſs and feel nought but calamity.

Yes, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways: as the heavens are higher than

than the earth, ſo are his thoughts higher than our thoughts and his ways than our ways. They comprehend in point of ſpace, they comprehend in point of time, whatever is and was and will be; they extend to the poſſible as to the actual, to the bad as to the good. And if we in regard to our thoughts and ways are liable to a thouſand errors and miſtakes, if our judgments, our views, our actions are often inconſiſtent, often fooliſh, often unjuſt, and always extremely uncertain and variable, yet God's thoughts and ways are above the reach of error and infirmity, pure truth, pure harmony, pure wiſdom and benignity, all ſuperlatively certain, invariable and infallible. — — Canſt thou however not deny this truth, o man, and how little reflection is requiſite, for being intimately and fully convinced of it! — Canſt thou not deny this truth; oh then let it be the leading principle of all thy judgments, the rule of all thy conduct. Preſume not to cenſure the works and ways of the Eternal, the Infinite, ſince thou ſeeſt, thou knoweſt, thou conjectureſt only an extremely ſmall portion of them, and the remainder is concealed from thy limited underſtanding as well as from thy ſhort ſighted eyes. Be aſhamed of the childiſh, the froward judgments which thou art ſo apt to paſs on the decrees and the dealings of him, whoſe purpoſes and doings no man, no angel, no created intelligence however exalted is able to ſearch out and to fathom. Never forget, that the ſpace which thou occupieſt and knoweſt, is an atom to the

the immenſe univerſe, and the time wherein thou liveſt and acteſt, an indiviſible inſtant to the boundleſs duration of eternity. In the ſentiment of thy weakneſs and unworthineſs humble thyſelf to the ground before the Onlywiſe, the Allpowerful, and adore him, whoſe underſtanding is infinite, whoſe authority is unbounded, whoſe wiſdom and loving kindneſs are inexhauſtible. In the deepeſt humility revere his decrees, his inſtitutions and arrangements, his diſpenſations, his commands, and revere them even then as juſt and proper, when thou canſt not comprehend them, when they ſeem at variance with thy welfare or that of thy brethren. Leave him to govern the world, leave him to conduct thy deſtinies and the deſtinies of all creatures, who knows both thee and them, loves both thee and them, and at the ſame time ſurveys all, comprehends all, and can will and effect nothing but good, only the beſt. Acquieſce entirely in the providence of the Allwiſe and Allbountiful, of thy father in heaven, truſt in it for more, infinitely more, than thou canſt conceive and underſtand, than thou canſt covet and deſire; and let no apparent diſorder and incongruity, no misfortune, no affliction, no revolutions and ſubverſions however extraordinary, unſettle thy faith in its over-ruling guidance and direction. All by inſenſible degrees will unfold, all clear up, every incongruity vaniſh, every obſcurity yield to meridian light, and all that we now call diſorder and evil, will diſſolve into the moſt admirable harmony, the moſt perfect

happineſs. And then, my dear friends, then ſhall we, together with all creatures in heaven and on earth, glorify in one united ſong of praiſe our creator and father, the ſovereign and ruler of all worlds and all times, as the Onlywiſe and Supremely-good, and in the knowledge and in the love of him be bleſſed beyond what our utmoſt expectation can reach! Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

What ought to be our Temper and Conduct, ſince God's Thoughts and Ways are ſo much higher than our's.

GOD, who governeſt and ruleſt all things, thou Good Supreme, it is our comfort that we alſo are under the guidance and direction of thy overruling providence, that even we are governed and directed by thee, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious. Yes, weak and inſignificant as we are in ourſelves, humble as the ſituation may be which we fill in thy immenſe domain, we however are and ſubſiſt by thee, and occupy the ſituation which thou haſt aſſigned us. And before thee, the Infinite, nothing is great and nothing ſmall, but everything is that which it can and is deſigned to be, is worthy of thy ſovereign wiſdom and benignity, is deſtined to perfection and happineſs, and is in the ſituation, in the connection, in which it can beſt attain its deſtination. But who is able adequately to conceive of thee, the

Eternal, the Infinite? Who can comprehend thy thoughts and ways? Who ſearch out their cauſes, their objects, their coherence? Who muſt not be content to adore in humble ſilence, where thou pleaſeſt to diſpoſe and act, to decree and to command? What elſe behoves feeble, ſhortſighted creatures, than reverentially to bow to the will of their creator, to reſign themſelves entirely to his guidance, and to revere as juſt and fitting whatever he does and appoints? And ſhall we preſume to blame thy works and ways, to murmur at thy diſpenſations, to be diſſatisfied with thy ſupreme controul, and to preſcribe laws to thee, the Sovereign of the univerſe? Shall we be thrown into perplexity at every appearance of diſorder and evil, into conſternation at every danger, into dejection and deſpondency at every misfortune? Shall we not calmly commit to thee the deciſion of our fortunes? Shall we be under thy all-comprehending providence and yet torment ourſelves with anxious cares? God, what falſe conceptions we ſhould entertain of thee and of ourſelves, how perverſely and fooliſhly ſhould we act, were we to be guilty of ſo erroneous, ſo criminal a behaviour towards thee! And how deeply ſhould it afflict us, that we muſt in thy preſence actually accuſe ourſelves of it! Oh may we henceforward at leaſt adopt a wiſer and better conduct! May we conſtantly be ſo ſubmiſſive to thee, ſo entirely reſigned to thy will, ſo dutifully truſt in thy parental tenderneſs, be ſo perfectly ſatisfied with

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all thy arrangements and diſpenſations, be ſo joyful and glad in thee, the wiſe and tender father of the world, as it is our duty and our felicity to be! Let the leſſons of wiſdom which are now to be delivered to us, contribute ſomewhat to awaken and to confirm theſe diſpoſitions in our ſouls. Yes, may a due ſenſe of our dependance on thee and our connection with thee be to us the perception of ſecurity, of joy, of felicity! We pray thee for theſe bleſſings in the name of thy ſon, our ſaviour and lord, and firmly truſting in his promiſes, thus addreſs thee farther in his words: Our father, &c.

ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

TO conceive highly and adequately of God — as far as man can conceive adequately and highly of him — is undoubtedly the chief prerogative of our nature, the ſublimeſt and worthieſt occupation of the human mind; it not only raiſes us above the beaſts of the field, but likewiſe above ſuch numbers of our ſpecies in leſs fortunate circumſtances, who know not God, or form only falſe, unworthy conceptions of him. Are we deſirous however, my pious hearers, that this prerogative

ſhould be and afford to us all that it is capable of being and affording to us, we muſt employ it properly. Are we deſirous that this better knowledge of God ſhould be to us a ſource of purer and ſuperior happineſs, it muſt become lively and efficacious. Our ſentiments and behaviour towards the deity muſt be ſuitable to the juſt and honourable ideas we form of him. All our thoughts and judgments, all our words and works muſt evince the reverence, the love, the attachment, the duty, the truſt, the ſubmiſſion and devotion, which we owe him as the firſt, the beſt, the moſt perfect of all beings. Otherwiſe we ſhould live in open contradiction to ourſelves, ſhould confeſs with our underſtandings the truth, and be governed by error in our ſentiments and conduct. Have we therefore recently endeavoured to form juſt and honourable ideas of the thoughts and ways of God; have we at leaſt perceived their infinite height above our thoughts and ways: we ſhould now alſo think, judge and behave as theſe perceptions and this conviction demand. And theſe views I heartily wiſh by my preſent diſcourſe to promote. Let us therefore more particularly conſider, my pious hearers, what influence the height of the divine thoughts and ways and their difference from our thoughts and ways ſhould have on the judgments and the behaviour of mankind.

It ſhould humble the proud, correct the caviller, pacify and encourage the timid and fainthearted, ſhame and ſatisfy the diſcontented, conſole the unhappy,

happy, rejoice the good, and diſcover to us all, who deſire and expect a bleſſed immortality, the faireſt proſpects in futurity. Oh may it do ſo in regard to us, my dear friends! What miſtakes will it enable us to avoid! What uneaſineſſes and impertinences will it ſave us! How much more contented and joyous ſhall we live!

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould therefore firſt humble thee, o thou who art proud of what thou conceiveſt, contriveſt and doſt, and on that account exalteſt thyſelf above thy fellow-creatures! What is then that which thou conceiveſt, contriveſt and doſt, if thou compare it with the conceptions, the contrivances, the doings of the Eternal, the Infinite? Darkneſs and obſcurity are thy cleareſt, brighteſt conceptions, dullneſs thy profoundeſt ſagacity, thy moſt enlightened reaſon, ignorance, and error thy moſt extenſive knowledge and ſcience, childiſh projects thy moſt prudent regulations and inſtitutions, weakneſs and impotence thy greateſt activity, when contraſted with the thoughts, the intelligence, the knowledge, the government, the efficacy of the Omniſcient and Omnipotent. — Collect ever ſo much knowledge of what has been and ſtill is; ſearch ever ſo curiouſly and unremittedly after truth; raiſe thy thoughts ever ſo high above viſible objects; ſoar ever ſo boldly to the remoteſt ſuns and worlds and even to their maker; never will thy knowledge compriſe more than an unſpeakably little

part of the whole; never completely explore any matter, any being; never diſcern one ſingle truth in its connection with all others; never penetrate only to the outermoſt forecourt of heaven, never come near to the inacceſſible light that enſhrines the Inviſible. And how oft will that gleam of light which thou followeſt forſake thee! How oft will thy mind tire in its boldeſt flights! How oft will all vaniſh before thee and only ſhroud thee in a deeper night! — And thy ways? How much may they include? How far do they extend? Where are the ſagacious, the vaſt contrivances that thou formeſt? The mighty works which thou bringeſt to effect? What are they in compariſon with thoſe which God deſigns and achieves? Be ever ſo ſagacious, be ever ſo induſtrious, enlarge thy ſphere of action ever ſo much, rule and govern whole nations and kingdoms: thou acteſt, thou ruleſt and governeſt over only a ſmall part of the little ſandhill, which the other ſons of earth inhabit and govern in common with thee; and crumbling as is the foundation on which thou buildeſt, ſo inſecure and frail are all the fair and ſtately ſtructures which thou contriveſt to erect upon it. Thy ways, like thy life, are ſcarcely a hand's breadth; they may be meted with a ſpan. Thy projects are commonly the projects of a child, that knows neither itſelf nor the world, neither the poſſible nor the actual, that in its plans takes into the account neither obſtacles nor difficulties, nor want of abilities, neither diſtance of time nor place.

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So likewiſe thou makeſt preparatives and arrangements for ages to come, and in a few years or days both they and thyſelf are forgotten. Thus thou ſometimes fondly imagineſt thy influence extends through whole countries, over many generations, thinkeſt to make thyſelf famous in the world, while thy influence is circumſcribed within very narrow bounds, and thou affordeſt perhaps ſome tranſient ſervices to a few individuals about thee. And ſhalt thou be proud of this, o man! Proud of a knowledge, that is rather darkneſs than light, proud of preparatory plans that betray more folly than ſagacity, proud of an activity which diſcovers more weakneſs than ſtrength! No, acknowledge from experience, how limited, how fallacious, how weak and vain thy thoughts and ways are, and humble thyſelf before him, whoſe thoughts and ways comprehend and govern all things, who has meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance, before whom all the iſlands are but atoms and the nations as drops of the bucket or as the ſmall duſt that adheres to the balance.

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould ſecondly bring the caviller to a ſenſe of his vanity and preſumption; and lead him back from his deviations to the way of underſtanding. How? Thou,

Thou, o man, preſume to blame the works and ways of the Infinite! Thou pretend to diſcover in the former and the latter diſorders, incongruities, confuſion, injuſtice! Think, that both the one and the other might be better, wiſer, kinder! How? Knoweſt and underſtandeſt thou then the thoughts of God? Knoweſt thou his works and ways? Knoweſt thou their inward frame, their entire deſtination, their multifarious connection, their viewleſs tract of conſequences and effects? How far then may thy eye reach? How much may thy mind be able to ſcan? Canſt thou ſurvey the worlds on worlds that form the univerſe? Canſt thou look forward into the remoteſt periods of time and eternity? Canſt thou ſurvey but the hundred-thouſandth part of what conſtitutes thy earth and paſſes on it? Canſt thou graſp in thy mind the fates and fortunes of but one perſon, of one ſingle creature in their complex range, according to their ſeveral reaſons and views, their cauſes and effects? Why blameſt thou then objects which thou knoweſt not, underſtandeſt not, which are quite beyond thy ſphere, or whereof thou diſcerneſt only the minuteſt part in a faint dawning light? How canſt thou deem anything unfitting or improper, when thou knoweſt not for what purpoſe it is deſigned, and what views it is to attain or to promote? How canſt thou affirm any thing to be ultimately bad, when thou knoweſt not all its future conſequences? How canſt thou detect diſorder and confuſion where the laws of order are concealed,

concealed, where thou perceiveſt only ſmall detached fragments of a vaſt edifice? How canſt thou rightly judge of the parts, when thou knoweſt not the whole to which they belong? How canſt thou pronounce the preſent to be defective, ſince the paſt whereon it is founded, and the future of which it contains the ſeed, are equally unknown to thee? Is thy cenſure more reaſonable, is it leſs prepoſterous, than that of the mole, who from his dark cell ſhould complain of the figure of the earth and preſcribe laws to the creator of it? Is thy cenſure more warrantable, is it leſs fooliſh and abſurd than that of the inſect, which crawling on the duſty threſhold of a grand portico belonging to ſome vaſt magnificent temple, ſhould from that ſituation imagine he had diſcovered faults in the plan and execution of the whole, a want of ſymmetry and beauty? No, ceaſe to cenſure what is ſo far above thy apprehenſion, and which thou canſt never cenſure without betraying the utmoſt weakneſs and folly. No, if thou juſtly refraineſt from cenſuring the plans, the arrangements, the actions of a ſage politician or a potentate of the earth, whoſe reaſons and views are hidden from thee, and whoſe underſtanding and conduct thou haſt otherwiſe every cauſe to revere and admire, oh much leſs preſume to cenſure the thoughts and ways of God, to which all the wiſdom and power of man is but folly and weakneſs, and whoſe conſummate perfection all his works and ways ſo plainly atteſt. Adore his perfection, his wiſdom, and benignity wherever

wherever thou deſcrieſt any footſteps of them, and doubt not that alſo where thou art unable to diſcern them, they would be as apparent and adorable to thy eyes and to thy mind, if thou wert able with them to ſearch deeper and to comprehend more.

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould thirdly ſoothe and fortify the timid and diſheartened. It is true, the events of the world, the contingences of mankind and of nations muſt often appear to us very extraordinary and ſurpriſing. We everywhere, it is true, ſee knots and intricacies the ſolution whereof mocks all human ingenuity. What changes, what viciſſitudes, what revolutions take place around us! How contradictory the deſigns, the affections, the purſuits of mortals! How their ſchemes and enterpriſes are perpetually croſſing and defeating one another, the good as well as the bad, the uſeful no leſs than the pernicious! Seems it not as if light and darkneſs, truth and error, virtue and vice, liberty and thraldom, happineſs and miſery were engaged in never ceaſing warfare, and ſometimes the one got uppermoſt, and ſometimes the other? Does not all appear to go ſometimes forwards, ſometimes backwards, now advancing nearer to perfection, now receding from it? Who can remain tranquil at the ſight of ſuch confuſion? Who is not often obliged to apprehend the worſt for himſelf and others? Such is the language of the timid, of the diſheartened. And to adopt it thou wouldſt be

juſtly warranted, o man, were it chance that governed the events of the world, thy deſtinies and thoſe of thy brethren. Thou wouldſt have juſt reaſon for theſe apprehenſions, thou wouldſt be abſolutely forced to deſpair of ſucceſs, if it were thy buſineſs to untie theſe knots, to reconcile thoſe contradictions, to end that ſtrife, and from what ſeems to thee a dreary chaos to produce order and light. But he who ſhould and will do it, is of infinite underſtanding and poſſeſſes unlimited power, whoſe thoughts and ways are as far ſuperior to thine, as the heaven is diſtant from the earth. Indeed his purpoſes are not thine, and the means which he employs to their accompliſhment, are not thoſe which thou wouldſt have choſen. But his purpoſes and his prearrangements are not like thine confined to that ſpan of ſpace which thou ſurveyeſt, to that moment of time in which thou liveſt. They take in the whole of time and ſpace, they extend to the poſſible as well as to the actual, they compriſe the evil no leſs than the good. And ſince he embraces all with his underſtanding and his power, how canſt thou be afraid, that anything could be and happen that were able to defeat his purpoſes or uſurp from him his all-controuling ſway? No, he graſps in his almighty hand the whole chain of cauſes and effects, and his all-ſeeing eye beholds the exacteſt order, the completeſt harmony, ſuitable alterations, adequate efforts, and never-ceaſing progreſs to perfection, where thou perceiveſt nought but diſorder and confuſion. Tor-

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ment not thyſelf therefore, be not diſpirited, ſhould the intricacy of human events appear to thee ever ſo extraordinary and unaccountable. He who regulates and guides them all, will alſo be able to unravel them all and to diſentangle thoſe knots, as is moſt agreeable to his deſigns, in purſuance of the laws of ſovereign wiſdom and goodneſs. As he has placed the ſand for the bound to the ſea, which it cannot paſs, ſo has he the hearts of kings, the hearts of all men in his hand, and he turneth them, as the rivers of water, whitherſoever he will. As he forms the light and creates darkneſs, ſo he makes peace and creates evil; and though the projects and works of men ſhall paſs away, yet his kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion endures throughout all generations.

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould fourthly put the diſſatisfied man to ſhame and teach him contentment. And in fact, how unjuſt, how fooliſh is thy diſſatisfaction, o man, and how muſt it fill thee with ſhame, immediately on conceiving that thou and all that is without thee, are under the inſpection and government of the Infinite! Knoweſt thou then, as well as the Omniſcient, what is good and ſalutary for thee and others, what ſituation, what connection is fitteſt for thee, what thou art deſigned to be and to undertake and to achieve as a part of the whole? Are then thy deſtinies all run out? Haſt thou already gone through the ſeveral ſtages

ſtages of thy exiſtence? Art thou already all that thou art intended to be and to become? Does not one condition ſpring out of another, one event ariſe from another? Can the child be immediately a man, the novice be already an adept, the ſcholar have directly completed his ſtudies? — or, ſhould the deity, whoſe thoughts and ways include all things in their capacious range, care ſolely for thee and not likewiſe for the whole of his innumerable family in heaven and on earth, not conſult the general welfare of his immenſe domain? Shall he govern himſelf ſolely by thy wiſhes, and not liſten to the prayers and ſighs of his other creatures? Shall he, to favour thy deſigns frequently illegitimate, frequently childiſh, frequently injurious to thyſelf, diſturb the wiſe order of things, and abandon his infinite purpoſes? Shall he, who ſees through all eternity, and ſurveys all the poſſible conſequences of whatever is and happens, ſhall he, like thyſelf, look only at the preſent and to that confine his care? Is then the preſent thy all? Is no hereafter expected by thee? Doſt thou not wiſh to be happy in that hereafter? And doſt thou know as well as the Omniſcient, how the preſent ſhould be conſtituted, in order to qualify thee for partaking in that future happineſs? May not thy preſent abaſement be the foundation to thy future aggrandiſement? May not the moſt adverſe as well as the moſt wiſhed for events lead thee ſooner or later to perfection and to felicity? Mayſt thou not now require the ſevereſt diſcipline,

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if thou art to reach thy glorious deſtination hereafter? No, be not diſſatisfied with thy condition, murmur not at thy deſtinies, as the former is not yet fixt forever and the latter are not yet ſpun out. Thy preſent ſituation is determined by him, who even now ſees in it the preparatives and the grounds for every future ſituation, into which thou ſhalt be tranſlated; thy fates are regulated and guided by him who beholds their entire coincidence, tenderly provides for every future ſcene of thy exiſtence, and is perpetually leading thee and all things elſe with unerring wiſdom by nearer approaches to completion.

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould fifthly conſole and pacify the unhappy. Are the thoughts and ways of the Eternal, the Infinite, of univerſal extent; do they reach to the bad as well as to the good, to the ſorrows as well as to the joys of all things living: then may we juſtly aſk; ſhall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Shall there be a misfortune that is not dependent on him and conducted by him? And ſhall there be an evil ſubſervient to him, whoſe mind ſurveys all whether in time or in ſpace, that can be abſolute evil, or that can always remain evil? Shall there be an evil, which in his hands, under his guidance and controul will not be the means and ſource of bleſſing? No, let not the misfortune by which thou art now oppreſſed, overwhelm thy ſoul,

ſoul, my chriſtian brother; think not that thou art therefore forſaken of God, or that he loves thee leſs and cares leſs for thee, than for thy proſperous neighbour whom perhaps thou envieſt. Think not that misfortune muſt always be attended by misfortune, that from ſorrow always freſh ſorrows muſt ariſe. No, the misfortune that befals thee is not miſchance, is not puniſhment, not the harbinger of ſtill greater misfortune; it is the diſpenſation of the Allwiſe and Allgracious, who governs all things, the evil as well as the good. It appertains to the ſeries of cauſes and effects, which he has ſelected as the beſt and eſtabliſhed for the production of the greateſt poſſible happineſs. Proſperity and adverſity are never wholly that which they appear to be in the eyes of ſhortſighted man, and thou thyſelf wilt ſooner or later learn to judge quite otherwiſe concerning them. What thou now calleſt misfortune, thou wilt hereafter, if thou bear it patiently, and wiſely profit by it, confeſs to be a benefit, a bleſſing. And he, the Omniſcient, who knows the poſſible as well as the actual, the future as well as the preſent, he ſees even now, from what follies and ſins, from what far greater evils, this misfortune will preſerve thee, in what virtues it will exerciſe thee, to what perfection lead thee, what influence it is calculated to have on thy future fortunes and on the conduct and the fortunes of ſo many of thy fellow creatures. He ſees even now from how many other ſorrows this ſorrow will ſave thee, how many joys it will in

other reſpects prepare for thee, what rewards and privileges in a better world it will qualify thee for. No, under the adminiſtration and controul of a deity, whoſe thoughts and ways extend through all extent, no unmerited misfortune can hurt thee. Thou mayſt perhaps be deſpoiled of thy property, bereaved of thy friends, diveſted of external diſtinctions, ſuffer pain, experience a variety of diſappointments: but thy deſtination, thy ſuperior perfection and happineſs, thou canſt never fail of but through thy own miſdemeanour. And to that deſtination, to that perfection and happineſs every way leads which God calls thee to go, the way of ſorrow as well as that of joy, a path beſet with thorns and briars as well as another that is ſtrewn with flowers; and if the Allwiſe directs thee to walk the former and not the latter, he does it becauſe he knows, that by the one thou canſt and wilt more ſecurely and ſpeedily advance towards the glorious prize than by the other. Therefore be ſtedfaſt in adverſity, be reſigned in affliction, and accept the evil as well as the good with calm ſubmiſſion from the hand of him who produces light out of darkneſs and does all things well at laſt.

The truth, that God's thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our thoughts and ways, ſhould ſixthly cheer the good man's heart, and teach him conſtantly and joyfully to truſt in God in all the methods of his providence. And what can indeed more elevate his mind and more refreſh his heart,

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what can diffuſe more light upon the natural and moral order, and make him more bold and intrepid amidſt the intricacies and viciſſitudes of things than this truth? I know, (this is the channel in which his meditations run) I know, I revere a God, a ſovereign potentate and ruler of the world, infinite in intellect involving all in his divine conceptions, of boundleſs power directing and over-ruling all, and who is eſſential wiſdom and benignity. From him no creature is concealed, by him nothing is diſregarded, the part no more than the whole, the ſmall no more than the great. The reptile that crawls on the ground, and the ground that bears him; the ſun that illumes and cheers whole worlds, and the inſect that flutters in its beams; the moſt depreſſed of mankind and the moſt exalted of angelic natures are equally preſent to him, alike important in conjunction with the whole. Not a movement of the duſt, not an idea of any thinking being, not any the leaſt alteration in the material and in the ſpiritual world is excluded from his providential care. He overrules and guides the fates of men, of nations, of worlds. And if in his infinite intellect he encircles all and governs all, he beholds, he knows even me, he conducts even all my deſtinies; I need not therefore be under any apprehenſion of being excluded from his love, from his inſpection and providence, and therefore the ſentiment of my weakneſs and unworthineſs perplexes me no more. No, little, mean though I may be, I am

however quickened by his breath, I belong however to the empire of God, I am however his creature, his ſubject, his offspring. No, without the will of my father in heaven not a ſparrow, not a hair of my head can fall to the ground. Every circumſtance of my life, however inſignificant in appearance, every event that befals me, every alteration that happens to me is ordained by him; and all that he ordains and does is right and fit, all has perfection and happineſs in view, all muſt and will promote the beſt intereſts of his children. Even now the whole train, the entire conſiſtence of my deſtinies lies unfolded before his all-ſeeing eye, and is the immutable decree of ſovereign wiſdom and benignity. Even now he is providing for my welfare through all futurity both of time and eternity. And on ſuch a God ſhall I ever think without reverence, without love, without inward delight? And in ſuch a God ſhall I not truſt with my whole heart? Of him ſhall I not hope pure good and conſtantly the beſt? To him ſhall I not calmly reſign the government of the world and the direction of my fates? From him ſhall I not accept both good and ill, proſperity and adverſity, life and death as a benefit, as the beſt that can betide me? No, far be from me all anxious cares, ſince God cares for me! No, on him I caſt all my cares, to him I commit my ways; he will aſſuredly bring them to a happy iſſue. Let then the courſe of things be ever ſo ſeemingly confuſed and ſurpriſing; let the fortunes

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of myſelf and my brethren be ever ſo intangled: he who regulates that courſe of things, and guides our deſtinies, can never be deficient in underſtanding, or in power, or in wiſdom and benignity, to regulate and guide all as the beſt intereſts of his empire and thoſe of his ſubjects require.

And what proſpects, what raviſhing proſpects in futurity are laſtly by theſe truths opened to us, who are panting after immortality, a bliſsful immortality, and as chriſtians may in the full aſſurance of hope expect it! Still the thoughts and ways of God are veiled in impenetrable darkneſs from us; and never ſhall we be able entirely to explore them, never to ſearch out the Unſearchable. But this we earneſtly believe, this we aſſuredly hope, that hereafter we ſhall be illumined by a brighter day, that our ſphere of ſight, our ſphere of knowledge, our ſphere of action will be much enlarged, that many of the divine thoughts and ways will gradually be unfolded to our view, that we ſhall apprehend more objects in time and ſpace, and perceive thoſe objects with far greater certainty and preciſion, than in this our infant ſtate is poſſible. One ſtage of our exiſtence is then travelled through, one ſcene of our life is finiſhed, one rotation of viſible objects is changed for another, and the ſtate of diſcipline and trial for the ſtate of retribution and fruition. And what a grand, important, comprehenſive whole to us is this! When hereafter it evolves before our ſtrengthened eyes; when our actions with their conſequences and

our deſtinies in their coherence are diſplayed to our view; when we ſee more of the ways which God has taken with the human race in general and with us and ours in particular, the ends to which he appointed each, and the methods whereby he led them to their appointment; when we more clearly perceive his diſpoſing power over all, his influence on all, his wiſdom and benignity in all, and penetrate deeper into the combination of things, into the conjunction of the preſent with the future: what amazing reſults will it yield us! What ſources of ſatisfaction and joy will it diſcloſe to us! How quickly then will every complaint be mute, every tear of pain be wiped away, every doubt diſappear! How entirely different will that appear to us which we now term diſorder, diſappointment, misfortune, evil, miſery! With what inward conviction, with what bliſsful emotions ſhall we then revere as blameleſs, as juſt and expedient all the thoughts and ways, the decrees and diſpenſations of the Higheſt! And when we ſhall for the firſt time be vouchſafed a clearer inſight into ſome of the thoughts and ways of God, that relate to our terreſtrial abode, to our firſt, ſhort life on earth, what will not that allow us to hope for through all the future periods of eternity, us, who are framed by the author of our nature for a ſuperior exiſtence, for a more exalted rank on the ſcale of being, for ever progreſſive perfection, and the perception of more pure and refined pleaſures! When, after how many æras of the world,

world, after how many diſtant revolutions of things ſhall we drain theſe inexhauſtible ſources of knowledge and felicity; when entirely comprehend but the leaſt portion of the thoughts and ways of the Infinite? And when will our reſearches into the abyſſes of the deity and the boundleſs expanſe of his empire, when will our keen purſuit of clearer light, of ſuperior perceptions, of greater activity, when will they ceaſe to employ our mind in the moſt honourable and worthy manner, and pervade it with joy and bliſs, to us unſpeakable, and which no human heart has ever yet been able to conceive?

SERMON XIX.

God has done all things well.

GOD, Sovereign Ruler of the univerſe, Father of ſpirits, of mankind, of all that is and lives and thinks, that we likewiſe are thy creatures, thy ſubjects, thy children; that we likewiſe are placed under thy inſpection and providence, and are ruled and governed by thee: we here publicly together rejoice before thee; that thou, the Lord God Omnipotent, reigneſt; for thy ſceptre is a ſceptre of righteouſneſs and clemency, thy government is the pure emanation of wiſdom and benignity. Oh happy we, that we are not the offspring of chance, that we are not abandoned to ourſelves, that we are not the maſters of our own deſtinies! Well for us, that thou haſt ſet bounds to our liberty and our faculties, preſcribed us rules of conduct, held out to us a fixt and glorious prize, and ſhewn us thyſelf the way that leads directly to it! How boldly may the creature truſt to his creator, the child to his

his parent, the wiſeſt, the tendereſt parent! How calmly to him reſign himſelf and his for unes and expect from him the eſtabliſhment of them! How undauntedly walk the way marked out and appointed to him by ſovereign wiſdom and benignity! Oh might we but always more clearly perceive, always more inwardly feel the relations and connections in which we ſtand to thee, our creator and father, always more and more rejoice in them, and always learn more firmly to believe that thy ordinances and inſtitutions are incapable of melioration, that thy laws are juſt and holy, thy diſpenſations and decrees ſupremely wiſe and kind, and that the final aim of thy adminiſtration is and can be nothing elſe but the progreſſively greater perfection and happineſs of us and all thy creatures. Do thou ſtrengthen us thyſelf in this conſolatory faith, o Father of mercies, and let us continually more fully experience its force and efficacy. Yes, to ſubmit entirely to thy will, and to acquieſce in thy determinations, willingly and gladly to obey thy laws, to accept both good and ill with gratitude from thy hand, to honour thee with implicit confidence, and to expect conſtantly of thee what is beſt: be this our fervent purſuit as the ſource from whence all our ſatisfactions and comforts muſt flow! Bleſs then to that end the doctrines of religion that are now to employ our reflection. Let us ſee them in ſuch a perſpicuous point of view, be ſo thoroughly ſenſible of their truth, that they may be a leading principle of

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our ſentiments and behaviour. Profeſſing ourſelves the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt thy ſon, may we find by a conduct ſtrictly conformable to ſo divine a religion as his, that favour in thy ſight which thou haſt expreſsly promiſed us by him; through whom we offer up to thee our ſupreme praiſes and everlaſting homage: Our father, &c.

MARK vii. 37.

And were beyond meaſure aſtoniſhed; ſaying: he hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak.

WE have often obſerved to you, my pious hearers, that the doctrines of religion can only ſo far act upon us, improve and conſole us, as they are preſent to our mind and intimately blended with all the reſt of our ideas and ſenſations. As long as they are foreign from our thoughts; as long as we but faintly recollect them or muſt call them up with effort; as long as they do not ſpontaneouſly preſent themſelves in all their luſtre as indubitable truths; as long as we are not in the practice of applying them to every particular object and occurrence: ſo long will they, like a dead grain of ſeed in the field, lie cold and barren in our hearts; we ſhall, amidſt all the riches that we poſſeſs, be poor and deſolate, amidſt all our refreſhments weak and impotent. Thus it is with the important religious

religious doctrine, which the words of our text furniſh us with an opportunity to conſider. If the jews, at ſight of the wonders which Jeſus performed before their eyes, had juſt cauſe to exclaim: he hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak; we have the moſt cogent reaſons at all that God ordains, commands, decrees, permits, achieves, to cry out: he has done and does all things well, he diſpoſes all things to the beſt ends, all his ways are full of wiſdom and benignity. This is one of the leading, moſt momentous principles of all wiſdom and all religion, one of the main pillars of human virtue and happineſs; a principle eſſentially inherent in chriſtianity, and which ſhould everywhere accompany the chriſtian, be always preſent to his thoughts, the ſoul and guide of all his judgments, diſpoſitions, actions, hopes and views. Indeed moſt chriſtians have it frequently in their mouths; talk much of this grand, comprehenſive principle, ſo ſoothing to the heart and mind: with but few however does it effect that which it might and ſhould effect, ſince but few have made themſelves thoroughly acquainted and familiar with it. Do we wiſh for this happy attainment; are we deſirous of experiencing it in all its force and felicity: we muſt blend it with our whole ſyſtem of thought and perception, we muſt learn to apply it to every particular inſtance that can poſſibly occur: to ſupply you with ſome direction on this head, my pious hearers, is the deſign of my preſent diſcourſe.

Let us therefore proceed to apply the principle; God has done and does all things well, to all his arrangements, inſtitutions, commands, diſpenſations, and dealings with mankind. Let us ſee how true, how fertile in ſerious conſequences, how comfortable and ſoothing it is in theſe ſeveral reſpects and connections.

God has done all things well, is applicable in the firſt place to the arrangements and inſtitutions which God has eſtabliſhed in nature, to the laws which he has preſcribed to the innumerable hoſt of his inanimate and animate creatures. As ſurely as his infinite intelligence comprehends and ſurveys all things, and his boundleſs power operates in all and through all; ſo ſurely are likewiſe the ſeveral parts of that whole adjuſted, connected, inſerted together, and dependent on each other in ſuch manner as is neceſſary and adapted to the preſervation and to the greateſt poſſible beauty and perfection of the immenſe univerſe. He has given to every one of the numberleſs orbs that beſpangle the vault of heaven, to every ſun, to every planet, the magnitude, the gravity, the form, the force, aſſigned it the place, preſcribed it the motion or the courſe, and placed it in the combination with the reſt, in which and by which alone it can be and ſubſiſt and act, and attain the wiſe, beneficent ends of its creator and ruler. All is one immenſe, cloſe compacted whole, the ſeveral parts whereof in various ways inſinuate together, confine each other, advance, retard, impel, uphold,

uphold, produce, enliven one another: a whole, where no power extrudes another, no part militates with another, no aim defeats another, no cauſe is diſproportionate to its effect, no effect without cauſe; where is neither want nor ſuperfluity, nor chaſm; where nothing is indeterminate, nothing caſual, nothing detached and ſeparate from the reſt; where abſolute, exquiſite connection and order and harmony exiſt. So alſo the direction and the relative poſitions of our earth towards the ſun, its motions on its own axis and its courſe round that inexhauſtible ocean of light, its connection with its nocturnal companion, the moon, its outward figure and its inward frame, the ſeveral greater and ſmaller changes and revolutions which it has already undergone and is ſtill undergoing, all its peculiar energies and effects, are in ſuch manner conſtituted, balanced, eſtabliſhed, as is ſuited to the place it fills in our ſolar ſyſtem and with it in the univerſe, and is beſt calculated to promote the life and happineſs of its inhabitants. So alſo fire and air and water and earth, the ſeveral elements and energies, move and act on this our earth; ſo the plants, the animals, mankind, propagate and multiply and nouriſh and ſuſtain themſelves, grow and come to maturity, ſpring up and paſs away, live and die upon it, according to the laws of the whole to which they belong, and the connection in which they are placed; according to the laws of the greateſt poſſible perfection. So alſo is everywhere ſo much motion and

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ſo much reſt, ſo much and ſuch variety of life and ſo much enjoyment of life; everywhere ſo much capacity and prediſpoſition, ſo many means and motives to joy and happineſs, and ſo much actual enjoyment of it, ſo much good and ſo much ill, ſo much light and ſo much darkneſs, as can be and ſubſiſt upon ſuch a globe as ours, and among creatures dwelling upon this globe, at the ſame time and in connection with the whole. And thus has God in regard to the arrangements and diſpoſitions in nature done all things well; all conduces to promote the greateſt poſſible perfection and happineſs. And this principle ſhould guide our judgments and animate our perceptions, whenever theſe arrangements and diſpoſals of the deity prove in any particular inſtances repulſive, inconvenient, diſagreeable to us, or ſeem injurious to ourſelves and others, and to tend to deſtruction. This principle ſhould pacify us, whenever we think we perceive confuſion, diſorder, incongruity, a preponderance of ill exiſting in nature; whenever we experience the manifold viciſſitudes of things and the inconſtancy of all that is terreſtrial; whenever we are alarmed at any unuſual, terrific appearances on the ſurface or in the bowels of the earth, or in the depths of the ſea, and threatening ourſelves or others, or the earth itſelf with total ſubverſion. God, ſhould we then ſay to ourſelves, God has done all things well; all nature is his workmanſhip, the workmanſhip of conſummate wiſdom and benignity. He prepared the earth, by

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him it ſubſiſts, by him it performs its revolutions and aſſumes its transformations, by him it crumbles into a ſeeming chaos, and ſprings out of that chaos with renovated beauty, as often and as ſoon as the welfare of mankind and of the whole requires it.

God has done all things well, holds ſecondly in regard to the arrangements and proviſions which he has made in the moral world and for promoting moral ends. That we come into the world in ſo weak and helpleſs a condition, continue ſo long in a ſtate of total dependence, and are never entirely independent; that we are obliged to exert ſo much labour and pains to procure the neceſſaries of life; that we are ſo liable to err and to miſtake, and yet can never err and miſtake with impunity; that the paths of wiſdom, of virtue, of happineſs are beſet with ſo many obſtacles and ſtumbling-blocks; that we are everywhere encompaſſed with difficulties, temptations and perils; that we are always learning and yet never thoroughly ſatisfy our curioſity, always exerciſing ourſelves and yet never arrive at perfection, always panting and ſtriving after happineſs, and yet never obtain the complete, undiſturbed enjoyment of it; that we employ our faculties ſo frequently without any apparent effect, ſo often fail of our purpoſes and hardly ever completely attain them; that our beſt concerted ſchemes ſo often prove abortive, and we are deceived in our faireſt expectations; that every folly, every ſin, every vice is its own puniſhment,

puniſhment, and is attended with more or leſs miſchief and miſery; that we do not always enjoy the recompenſe of virtue, are often obliged to make coſtly ſacrifices to her, and muſt ſow and labour only in hope: all this is the effect of the inſtitutions and arrangements of God in the moral world. And here likewiſe God has done all things well. Is it expedient that thou, o man, from a ſenſual, animal creature, ſhouldſt be formed and educated into a rational, wiſe, good, happy intelligent agent; is it expedient that thy faculties ſhould be exerted, drawn forth, exerciſed, ſtrengthened, perfected; is it expedient that thou ſhouldſt act, not from blind inſtinct, but by juſt perceptions and freely, is it expedient for thee to ſhun the deceitful paths of folly and vice, and purſue the career of virtue with courage and reſolution; is it expedient for thee to know, to ſeek, to enjoy ſubſtantial, laſting happineſs, and learn to look rather at the unſeen than at the viſible, at the future than at the preſent; is it expedient that thou ſhouldſt prepare and fit thyſelf for a ſuperior life: then all theſe inſtitutions and arrangements could be no other than they are; they are the propereſt means for promoting thy perfection and forwarding thee to thy appointment. Yes, God has done all things well: this ſhould inſpire thee with courage and fortitude, if the unavoidable troubles of life preſs hard upon thee; if thou feeleſt the difficulties of becoming wiſe and good; if thou art ſighing under

under the lamentable conſequences of thy folly, and art eating the fruits of thy evil doings; if thou art ſometimes obliged to pay dearly for experience and prudence, muſt ſometimes work harder and more for others than for thyſelf, or enjoyeſt not the fruits of thy labour; if thou attaineſt not here to that degree of wiſdom, of virtue, of perfection, to which thou wiſheſt to attain. All this is perfectly conſiſtent with the ſtate of education and diſcipline, in which thou liveſt at preſent; and the proſpect of a ſuperior ſtate, a ſtate of fruition and recompence ſhould render it not only very tolerable, but eligible and deſirable to thee.

God has done all things well, holds thirdly in regard to the particular laws which he has preſcribed to us as moral creatures. They are all juſt and expedient, ſo many means and methods to perfection and happineſs, how numerous ſoever the reſtraints they put upon us, however hoſtile they are to our luſts and paſſions, whatever attention, care, ſelf-denial, exertion of our faculties it may coſt us, whenever they deprive us of ſome preſent advantage, ſome tranſient pleaſure. I am to eat my bread in the ſweat of my brow; I am to controul my ſenſual appetites and ſubmit them to the dominion of reaſon; I am to live more for others than for myſelf, and to ſacrifice my private emolument to the public good; I am not to revenge the wrongs I have received, not to requite evil with evil, muſt love my enemies and

do good to them that injure me; I am to be humble, meek, placable, generous; I muſt never be weary and faint in acts of juſtice and mercy, and be always in purſuit of higher perfection; I am to ſurrender my will entirely to the will of God, willingly ſuffer whatever he pleaſes to inflict on me, gladly do whatever he calls me to do, and ſubmit without repugnance to be guided and governed by him, as he in his wiſdom and loving-kindneſs ſees fit; I am conſtantly to connect the preſent with the future, and by all that I conceive and do in the preſent life, to prepare and fit myſelf for a better, a ſuperior life: how oft, my deareſt friends, how oft do our luſts and paſſions revolt againſt theſe laws! How often do we imagine that we are ſufferers by them! How often does the ſecret wiſh ariſe, that we were leſs tied down! And yet how well, how unſpeakably well it is for you, for me, for all mankind, that theſe laws are given, and that the lawgiver has enforced them by all poſſible ſanctions! Who can deſcribe the miſery that would befall you and me and the whole of human ſociety, were theſe laws ever entirely to loſe their force and authority! No, even as legiſlator God, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, has done all things well. Never without danger can we exceed the bounds which he has ſet us, never without detriment neglect the duties which he has enjoined us, never without injury omit the exerciſes which he has preſcribed us. By avoiding ſin, we

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avoid miſery and death; by the love and practice of virtue, we love and promote our own happineſs and that of mankind in general. Yes, the ſentiment that God has done all things well, ordered all for the beſt, ſhould render our obedience to his commandments eaſy, and juſtice and mercy a delight, it ſhould never allow us to repine at his injunctions, never reluctantly to comply with them, even though that compliance ſhould coſt us ever ſo much labour and pains, deprive us of ever ſo many temporal advantages and ſenſual enjoyments. Obedience to the will of God ſhould be now and for ever our pleaſure and our glory!

God has done and does all things well, is applicable fourthly to the providence and government which he extends over all. It is not the government and inſpection of a limited intellect, capable of comprehending and combining but little at once, forgetting the future in the preſent, the detail in the groſs, and loſing ſight of a thouſand objects in directing its attention to one; not the inſpection and government of a ſelfiſh, weak, capricious ruler, who thinks more of himſelf than his ſubjects, cares more for himſelf than his people, often ſwayed by paſſion, often determined by chance, now changing his plans and deſigns, now failing in one and the other, or unable to execute and accompliſh them. No, the providence and government of the world is the concern of an unbounded and infallible intellect, of unlimited and irreſiſtible power, of inexhauſtible

and ever active benignity; the concern of a mind which ſurveys and encircles all, ſees all at once and in the cleareſt light, of a God to whom nothing is great, nothing ſmall, nothing is concealed, nothing uncertain, nothing doubtful, who knows the poſſible as well as the actual, the paſt and the future as well as the preſent; of a God, whoſe attention is never fatigued, whoſe efficacy is never exhauſted, whoſe plans nothing can diſconcert or confound, whoſe views nothing can defeat, whoſe will nothing can effectually reſiſt; of a God, whoſe intuitions are never obſcured and effaced, whom no error can deceive, no craft elude, no paſſion miſlead, no influence of outward objects ſway, who from everlaſting to everlaſting is eſſential wiſdom and benignity. He cannot therefore poſſibly ordain anything, do anything, permit anything, that is not right and fit, that is not in every caſe the beſt, that is not ſooner or later, one way or another, attended with perfection and happineſs. Let the ways of his providence ſeem ever ſo dark and intricate to us: before him all is unclouded light, all perfect order. The aſſociation of means and ends may appear to us ever ſo incomprehenſible, ever ſo incongruous; the coherence and combination of the whole and its parts ever ſo embarraſſed: his ends will be infallibly attained, the means he employs are always the ſureſt and beſt, and all evolve and diſentangle themſelves agreeably to the laws of ſovereign perfection. Yes, God does all things well, he governs all for the

beſt, this ſhould be our leading principle, the clue for our judgments to follow, the means of our pacification, when we cannot comprehend and explain the revolutions, the reverſes that happen in the world and among mankind; if we are ſurpriſed at the ſeemingly unaccountable mixture of light and darkneſs, of happineſs and miſery, we there perceive; if the fates of nations, of empires, of the whole human race appear myſterious to us; if we are confounded at the preſent and terrified at the future. Yes, all this, ſhould we conſtantly ſay to ourſelves, all this muſt be good, muſt be incapable of being rendered more complete and admirable, ſince it is the arrangement, the reſult of the providence and government of the Allwiſe and Allgracious, and whatever he ordains and does, is well done.

God has done and does all things well, applies, fifthly, to all the diſpenſations which he is pleaſed to vouchſafe to each of us in particular. Under his inſpection and government the ſmall as well as the great is placed, the part as well as the whole to which it belongs; the grain of ſand as well as the ſun, the worm as well as the man, the man as well as the angel. In his ſight nothing is little, nothing is inſignificant, nothing contemptible; everything is his creature, the work of his hands, the ſtamp and evidence of his perfection, means to the accompliſhment of his grand deſigns. With the ſame wiſdom and benignity, with which he rules and governs heaven and earth, guides and conducts the endleſs

ſyſtems of ſuns and ſtars, with the ſame wiſdom and benignity he rules and governs every inhabitant, however inſignificant in the abſtract, of that heaven and of this earth, of thoſe ſuns and thoſe ſtars, with the ſame wiſdom and goodneſs he conducts likewiſe everything onward to anſwer the end of its being. If without his will not a bird can fall to the ground, not a hair of our heads, what is there ſo little, ſo inſignificant as not to be under his inſpection and government? No, all the faculties of our mind, all the powers of our body, every thought of the former, every motion of the latter, depends on him, the ſole, ſelf-exiſtent, firſt, eternal fount of energy, the father of all ſpirits and of all fleſh. Riches and poverty, health and ſickneſs, majeſty and meanneſs, proſperity and adverſity, thraldom and liberty, life and death, are equally in his hand, and are ſeverally by him diſtributed, aſcertained, decreed, balanced and combined together in ſuch manner, as may beſt conſiſt with the greateſt poſſible welfare of all living beings in general, and of each in particular. No one is poſtponed or preferred to another from partial or ſelf-intereſted views; no one needs ſuffer on account of another, without being indemnified for it; no one will for ever forego or bear, what at preſent by means of the combination of things he is obliged to forego or to bear; no one will fail of his appointment to happineſs; but one ſooner, another later, one in this, the other in another method will arrive at it. No evil is abſolutely evil; none remains entirely

entirely ſo. Every one is gradually advancing towards his perfection, now through ſufferings, now through ſatisfactions, and though he were to reach that object not till after the lapſe of countleſs ages, after remote periods and epochas of eternal exiſtence, how infinite would be his gain, how deſirable his fate! Yes, be this the point of view, from whence I contemplate the deſtinies diſpenſed by my God, this the judgment that I paſs on all his dealings with me! Let the ways by which he leads me be dark or bright, rugged or plain, ſtrewed with flowers or planted with briars, conduct me ſtraight and directly, or by various turnings and with toilſome ſteps to the glorious prize; they are the ways of the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, who does all things well, who over-rules the immenſe ſeries of my preſent and future deſtinies, my deſtinies both in the preſent and the future world, and has adapted them all to my capacities, to my neceſſities, to the true end of my being.

God has done and does all things well, is applied laſtly by the worſhipper of God to all the viciſſitudes, accidents, events, little or great, that betide him, and thereby keeps his mind in continual ſerenity, even though in every other reſpect he is ſurrounded by darkneſs. He conſiders everything in its dependance on the will of the ſovereign ruler of the world; and finds all that is agreeable to his will to be juſt and expedient. If therefore he meet on his way obſtacles that he cannot ſurmount, difficulties which

he is unable to vanquiſh; if in his kind and laudable exertions he meets with obſtinate and inſuperable oppoſition; do his lawful undertakings miſcarry; is the execution of his beſt, moſt prudent plans defeated or retarded; are his harmleſs, generous expectations blaſted: he is far from pertinaciouſly perſiſting in a path ſhut againſt him by providence, from wilfully perſevering in a purpoſe which heaven does not approve; from proſecuting ſchemes or harbouring deſires which are contrary to its deſigns. No, to him, the Only-wiſe, who does all things well, he makes a free-will offering of all his projects, enterpriſes, exertions, to him he ſacrifices them in the firm conviction that their encouragement, their ſucceſs, their accompliſhment would be at variance with the laws of conſummate wiſdom and benignity. Does he, without any impeachment of his prudence, ſuſtain any loſs of property, of reputation, of abilities, of friends, of relatives: here likewiſe with filial ſubmiſſion he adores the God, who does all things well, and is aſſured, that he, who has deprived him of that property, that reputation, thoſe abilities, thoſe friends, thoſe relatives, did it in the wiſeſt and kindeſt views, and thereby has parentally conſulted his welfare and the common intereſt of the whole. Is he by pains and ſickneſſes reſtrained in his purſuit of higher perfection, in his uſeful occupations; is he ſummoned to quit his terreſtrial career, ere he has completed the half of it, ere he has reached the ordinary term: he ſubmits without murmur to

thoſe

thoſe reſtraints, and follows with complacency this call of his God, for he believes and knows, that the Lord alſo in this reſpect does all things well, that he beſt underſtands what and how much every one of his ſubjects has here to undertake and to achieve, how long he is here to live and act, when and in what manner he is to exchange this ſtate for another. And thus does the votary of God enjoy and forego, poſſeſs and ſurrender, do and ſuffer, bear and forbear, whatever God gives him to enjoy, to poſſeſs, to perform, and whatever he calls him to forego, to ſurrender, to ſuffer, and to tolerate, in the firm conviction, that this proportion and this intermixture of enjoyment and defect, of joys and ſorrows, of activity and limitation could beſt, alone ſuit the wiſeſt combination of things and the ſucceſsful attainment of its deſtination. Thus does the ſentiment that God has done and does all things well, accompany him in all his ways, guiding him boldly and ſafely through all the labyrinths of life, enabling him to bear the troubles and burdens of it, willingly to fulfill its duties, cheerfully and wiſely to enjoy its ſatisfactions, diffuſing amidſt the darkneſs with which he is ſo often environed, ſufficient light for purſuing his courſe, emboldening him to ſee the cataſtrophe of it before him without fear and conſternation, and teaching him to ſeek and to find his conſolation both in life and in death, in throwing himſelf entirely into the arms of the wiſeſt and tendereſt of fathers,

and

and expecting from him only good, and conſtantly the beſt.

Well for us, my deareſt friends, if we learn thus to blend this grand and ſoothing idea, God has done and does all things well, with our whole ſyſtem of thought and perception, thus to employ it in all that we do and ſuffer, and that befalls ourſelves and others, and apply it to all things, to the ſmall as to the great, to the ill as to the good! This idea gives a totally different aſpect to all that we ſee and hear and learn; ſheds light and joy on all; preſerves us from a thouſand fallacies of ſophiſtry and artifices of impoſture, along the dubious journey of life; enucleates and unravels to us many things both in the natural and the moral world; pacifies us concerning all that we cannot comprehend and explain; and is inexhauſtible in power and conſolation. Oh let us ever hold faſt this grand, this bliſsful idea; let us imprint it deeply in our minds and hearts; let us become more and more familiar with it: ſo ſhall we have in it, both in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death the beſt preceptor, the ſafeſt guide, the faithfulleſt friend; and hereafter when arrived at the goal, and the ways of God preſent themſelves to us in a clearer view, yes, then ſhall we aſſuredly in full conviction and with inward exultation exclaim: God has done all things, all things well! Glory be unto our God for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMONS

ON

CHARITY.

SERMON XX.

The intimate Correſpondence and Connection of Mankind the Baſis of Charity.

GOD, thou art love. With paternal complacency thou embraceſt all thy creatures, all mankind. Life and joy and happineſs are diſpenſed by thee, the eternal, inexauſtible fountain of life, of joy, of happineſs, over all the parts of thy immenſe domain. Thy love, like thyſelf, is infinite, unbounded, immutable. In doing good thou even now principally revealeſt thy majeſty, and wilt be always more glorioufly revealing it from everlaſting to everlaſting. Even us, thy children, thou haſt formed and ordained for mutual love, made it our inceſſant duty and the moſt exuberant ſource of our felicity. Therefore haſt thou cauſed us all to derive our extraction from one blood, and connected us ſo cloſely, ſo intimately together. Therefore haſt thou aſſigned

aſſigned us all the ſame place of abode, the ſame occupations, given us all the ſame nature, endowed us all with the ſame faculties, rendered us all capable of the ſame ſatisfactions and ſubjected us to the ſame wants and ſufferings. Therefore haſt thou implanted in our hearts the ſocial, ſympathizing inſtincts and affections, and ſo indiſſolubly interwoven all the affairs and events of our lives. Therefore haſt thou deſtined and called us to the ſame perfection and happineſs, and wouldſt that we ſhould all purſue it on the ſame path. Oh that every one of us might obey thy call, this call to felicity! Might all perceive and feel our relationſhip together, and our bleſſed connection with thee, our common parent! All conſider and treat each other as relatives! All expand our hearts to evangelical charity, and in the enjoyment of it be happy! O almighty Father, ſend down the ſpirit of love into our hearts, purify them from all inhuman ſentiments and affections, and let righteouſneſs, equity, tenderneſs, beneficence, placability, and univerſal brotherly love take poſſeſſion of them and be ſeen in all our words and works. Grant that chriſtianity, which announces and preaches only love, may likewiſe in this reſpect, manifeſt its divine power and efficacy in us, and be ever farther diffuſing its benign effects within us and among us. Bleſs to that end our reflections on theſe important objects, and let them make a deep and laſting impreſſion on our hearts. We implore

plore theſe mercies of thee, as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, with filial boldneſs, and addreſs thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

MATTH. xxii. 39.

Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.

THE fundamental law of chriſtianity is love, love towards God and man; and this is at once the peculiar characteriſtic and the glory of chriſtianity. This propoſition though univerſally recogniſed and admitted, is perhaps but ſeldom apprehended in its entire importance, in that ſublime ſignification which ſhews it to be divine. A doctrine, a religion, preaching love as its leading principle, evidently carries with it the characters of a ſuperior and celeſtial origin! How worthy of the ſupremely perfect being, of the being that is eſſential love! And how venerable, how deſerving of all acceptation muſt it appear to every rational and reflecting mind, that is in purſuit of happineſs, and knows what happineſs is! For what way leads more directly and ſecurely to this ultimate aim of all our wiſhes, than love, than the love of God and man!

And how entirely peculiar is this advantage to chriſtianity! What human ſcheme of philoſophy, what human code of laws, what other ſyſtem of religion has ever been built on this firm foundation, and

and been thoroughly pervaded and inſpired by this generous ſpirit? Oh that this ſpirit did but actually animate and govern all the profeſſors of chriſtianity, and plainly ſhew itſelf in their ſentiments and actions, as it diſplays itſelf in the doctrine they confeſs! How much more contentment and happineſs would there be among mankind, among chriſtians! How much more good would this love effect, than the moſt celebrated patriotiſm was ever able to produce! If patriotiſm has a tendency to ſeparate the affections of man from man, to divide the intereſts of one people from another, to alienate one kindred from another, and to promote the welfare of a ſmaller or larger portion of mankind at the expenſe of all the reſt; and be as unjuſt and cruel on one ſide, as it ſeems generous and magnanimous on the other: yet chriſtian love unites all nations, all mankind together, and never injures and oppreſſes one, in order to procure profit and advantage to the other. Were we therefore indeed united in a practical, conſiſtent, animated and ſtedfaſt belief in this unſpeakably important ſentiment, its genuine effects would be deeply to imbue our minds with the love of God above all, and of our neighbour as ourſelves. Compared with theſe two great and peculiarly fundamental principles, how ſubordinate, how uneſſential would all differences of opinion appear! Arrayed in all the grace and dignity, in all the ſimplicity and lovelineſs of her native character, chriſtianity would then delight to become the aſſociate of the children of men.

men. Inſtructed by her counſels, invigorated by her conſolations, animated by the glorious proſpects to which ſhe would exalt our views, we ſhould lean upon her as our friend and companion along the arduous journey of life; and, like a guardian angel from the immediate preſence of the Almighty, ſhe would unceaſingly point our footſteps to the regions of bliſs. The expectations inſpired by antient prophecy would thus indeed be happily fulfilled: the wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child ſhall lead them. — They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea.

If we may not venture to hope, my dear friends, to ſee theſe bleſſed effects of chriſtianity extend ſo widely among its profeſſors: yet we cannot deny that theſe effects would be natural, adequate to its deſign and conformable to its doctrines: yet we may hope, that it will diſſeminate them the more extenſively, and occaſion the more felicity amongſt mankind, in proportion as chriſtianity, purged from human appendages and corruptions, is recogniſed and taken for what it really is. In the mean time, let us, every one in his place and in his ſphere, contribute what we can to thi end. Let us imprint this fundamental law of chriſtianity profoundly in our hearts, reflect frequently upon it, continually

convince ourſelves more and more of the truth, of the excellency of it, that it may continually have a greater influence on us, and through us on others.

Let us now proceed to do ſo in regard to charity. Love thy neighbour as thyſelf: this is the firſt and the laſt commandment of chriſtianity. And by our neighbour is meant all mankind, of whatever tribe, of whatever nation, of whatever rank, of whatever religion they may be. This we are taught by Jeſus, this we are taught by his apoſtles; telling us, that, herein we are to make no diſtinction between Iſraelite and Samaritan, between Jew and heathen, between Greek and barbarian, between bondman and freeman; that we are even to love our enemies, and to do good to thoſe that injure us. Every man then according to the doctrines of chriſtianity is our neighbour; no one an alien to us, every one cloſely connected with us; every one a member of the great family of God on earth, every one deſerving of our benevolence and of our beneficence. And how ſtrikingly conſiſtent is this with the dictates of ſound common ſenſe! How reaſonable therefore in chriſtianity to inculcate it upon us, and to firſt bring it into circulation, and incorporate it into the maſs of our knowledge and principles! We will now make it the ſubject of our reflections, in order to gain a clearer view of it. We will conſider how cloſely mankind are connected together, and how much reaſon we therefore have, to treat every man as our relation, as our brother and friend; and afterwards

afterwards proceed to ſhew how we are to love him as ſuch.

All, my pious hearers, connects us, men, together, whatever we may otherwiſe be, and however we may be called beſides; all connects us moſt intimately together. All that makes man to be what he is; all that elevates him above other creatures; all that is moſt important and moſt covetable in his ſight, and wherein he takes the greateſt intereſt; all this we have in common with each other; origin and lineage; nature and faculties; wants; pleaſures; ſufferings; appointment; proſpects and hopes.

The ſame origin and deſcent. Yes, we are all duſt from duſt; all earthly, frail, mortal deſcendants of a primitive earthly, frail, mortal progenitor; all children of Adam, to whom the voice declared: duſt thou art, and unto duſt ſhalt thou return. And ſuch is the monarch no leſs than his vaſſal; the prince as well as his ſubject; the noble who boaſts of his birth and is proud of his pedigree, becauſe he can rehearſe the names of his anceſtors, as well as the man of low degree, whoſe fathers lie uncelebrated and unknown, by the ſide of the former's, in the lap of the earth. — But likewiſe, in us all reſides and acts ſomething ſuperior and ſpiritual, ſomething divine, that is not duſt, that ſoars above it, that is of a nobler origin, of divine deſcent, and makes us imagine and feel, that we are akin to angels, that we are the children of God, the offspring of the Higheſt. And this character of ſuperior extraction,

this lineament of the divine ſimilitude, this moſt glorious of all diſtinctions, marks and decorates man, as man, without regard to the title he bears, and the poſt he fills amongſt his brethren.

Yes, we have all the ſame nature, the ſame mental and corporeal faculties, the ſame capacity of progreſſively attaining to new degrees of perfection. A perſpicuous inward conſciouſneſs of ourſelf, and of our diſtinction from everything without us, is our common property. Reaſon and liberty ennoble us all; and neither ſenſe, nor wit, nor ſagacity, nor genius is excluſively the portion of any one claſs of mankind. We are all on one ſide, related to the beaſts of the field, and on the other to ſpiritual beings of a ſuperior order; all ſtand in the like analogies to the viſible and inviſible world; and all externals by which one man is diſtinguiſhed from another, and raiſed above him, be they never ſo ſplendid, are mere tinſel and ſhow, rather than eſſential preeminence, more the baubles of the child than the real honour of the man. His body is ſtill the ſame admirable mechaniſm of the creator, whether it be hung with purple or with rags; and his mind bears upon it in every ſtation the infallible marks of the ſame ſuperior origin, and the ſame grand deſignation.

Yes, we have all the ſame animal and intellectual wants. We are all alike weak, alike frail, alike dependant on a thouſand outward accidents. Hunger and thirſt and cold and heat and exhauſtion and

ſleep are common to us all; make meat and drink and raiment and repoſe indiſpenſably neceſſary to us all; and none can ſatisfy theſe urgent wants without the various helps of his brethren. No one is ſufficient to himſelf; no one finds in himſelf and by himſelf, all that he wants, and all that his heart pants after; each is impelled by his propenſities and deſires, as well as by his wants, to others, makes himſelf dear and valuable to them, and each prefers the company of the meaneſt and weakeſt of his fellow creatures to abſolute and uninterrupted ſolitude. On numberleſs occaſions we all want advice and comfort and ſupport, the wiſe as well as the unwiſe, the powerful as well as the feeble, the man as well as the child, the ruler as well as his ſubject. We all long for the felicity of love and friendſhip; and neither opulence nor dignity, nor any other diſtinction, can compenſate the want of it or ſatisfy the heart with which no other throbs in frank and joyous ſympathy. We all thirſt for light, for knowledge, for certainty, for happineſs, and can only allay this thirſt, by imparting our perceptions and powers to others, and purſuing theſe objects with mutual ardour.

In like manner, we all have the generality and the chief of our pleaſures in common. The pleaſures of ſenſe, the pleaſures of the mind, domeſtic and ſocial pleaſures: not one, be he ever ſo poor and low, is abſolutely debarred from the enjoyment of them. The pureſt, the richeſt ſources of them

ſtand open to all; to the poor as well as to the rich, to the countryman as well as to the citizen, to the ſervant as well as to his maſter. The blithe ſentiment of our exiſtence, of our life, of our faculties, of all that we are and have, and can do, inſpires and animates us all. Our organs of ſenſe inceſſantly convey to us all thouſands and thouſands of agreeable ſenſations, images and ideas, for uſe and for enjoyment; the light of day, the beautiful ſcenes of nature, the breath of ſpring, the bright ſmiling ſky, the radiant hoſts of ſtars, the fertility and decorations of the earth, gladden and delight us all. The ſatisfying of our natural wants is to us all attended with real inward pleaſure, by whatever means though ever ſo ſimple and eaſy, or ever ſo difficult and artificial. The ſucceſsful completion of work, the conſciouſneſs of duty diſcharged, the reflection on the good we have done or promoted, procure felicity to us all, however comparatively inconſiderable this work, this duty, this good. To impart ourſelves to others, to love and to be loved by others, is peculiar to no claſs of men more than to another; and the pleaſure of domeſtic life and of ſocial intercourſe, has as many, or even more charms for the mean man, who lives in ſilence and obſcurity, than for the great, ſurrounded by pomp and ſplendor, and attended by a numerous train of enviers or flatterers. To raiſe our minds to God, to revere him as our Father, and to feel our bleſſed connection with him, is to all of us the ſublimeſt joy;

joy; and the joys of piety and devotion, every perſon, whatever be his ſtation, may enjoy, the inhabitant of the cottage, as well as the potentate on the throne.

Have we all, my pious hearers, the generality, the chief of our pleaſures in common, ſo are we all obnoxious to the ſame afflictions. No one is exempted from them; the higheſt no more than the loweſt, the richeſt no more than the pooreſt. Neither rank, nor wiſdom, nor merit can abſolutely ſhield any one of us againſt them. Limits, very narrow, inſuperable limits are ſet to us all in all reſpects. Contradiction and oppoſition, obſtacles and difficulties, are met with by us all on the path of life. Troubles and burdens of various kinds, we have all to bear, from our entrance into this world to our departure out of it, the ſtrong as well as the weak, the prince as well as the ſubject, the favorite of fortune as well as the child of adverſity. No one is ſafe from all diſaſtrous accidents, from all ſorrows and cares, from great and ſudden reverſes of fortune. Loſſes, ſeparation, debility, pain, ſickneſs, death, are the portion of us all. The terreſtrial life of us all is a pilgrimage through ways that are ſometimes dark, ſometimes dangerous; a toilſome march up a ſteep acclivity to a ſuperior object.

Yes, even one deſignation have we all in common, and may all attain it, how great ſoever the difference in our outward circumſtances. Here we are all to become reaſonable from merely ſenſual creatures;

to acquire a perſpicuous conſciouſneſs of ourſelves, and habits of conſideration, and learn to underſtand our capacities and to uſe our faculties. Wants, dangers, labour, toil, joys, ſorrows, converſation, example, nature and religion, are to form us into intelligent, wiſe, good, virtuous beings, and make us capable of a ſuperior ſtate. The life of us all on earth is diſcipline, exerciſe, preparation; and no one of us is totally deficient in means and motives to learn and to become, what he is deſigned to learn and to become, and to exerciſe himſelf in, and to prepare himſelf for, that which he is appointed to exerciſe himſelf in, and what he is appointed to prepare himſelf for. To us all the ſame object is propoſed, and the road by which we are to purſue it, and by which we may attain it, is the ſame for all. It is the road of knowledge, of wiſdom, and of virtue, which is entirely ſhut up againſt no one, and out of which no one can ſucceed in his endeavours after the goal of his perfection and happineſs.

And thus finally the ſame proſpects and hopes are common to us all. The proſpect into a ſuperior, a better ſtate; the hope of an everlaſting continuance, of a bleſſed immortality; the expectation of a greater proficiency in wiſdom and virtue, a happier application of our faculties, a nobler uſe of our activity, a rich harveſt from the ſeed of our good actions, an inceſſant approximation to perfection; theſe proſpects, theſe hopes, theſe expectations are common to us all; the poor man ſhares them with the

the rich, the low with the high, the unlearned with the profound ſcholar. And theſe alone make the nature of man important to him, they conſtitute his real dignity, his higheſt diſtinction; a dignity, a diſtinction, in compariſon whereof the ſplendor of thrones is obſcurity, and the moſt unlimited power, childiſh imbecility.

So numerous, ſo important, ſo eſſential are the particulars, which, as men, we have all in common, my dear friends. All the ſame origin, the ſame nature, the ſame faculties, the ſame wants, the ſame pleaſures, the ſame griefs, the ſame deſtination, the ſame proſpects and hopes. How various the ties, how ſacred and indiſſoluble the ties that unite us together! How ſtrict, how intimate is our affinity and fellowſhip! What reaſons for conſidering every man as our neighbour, as our kinſman and brother, and for embracing him as ſuch with benevolence and affection! How ſtrikingly true, how undeniable is this repreſentation of the eſſential equality and cloſe union of mankind, to ſound common ſenſe and to the uncorrupted feelings of the heart! And how venerable to us ſhould this render chriſtianity, to which we are principally indebted for it! Yes, every man, whether he be near me or afar off; whether he belong to this or the other civil and religious ſociety; whether he ſpeak my own or a foreign language; whether he agree with me in opinions and cuſtoms, in manners and way of life, or differ in all theſe matters from me; let him be ever ſo far

far exalted above me, or placed ever ſo low beneath me; let him dwell and live in this or any other part of the globe: every one is my neighbour, my brother; every one is and has eſſentially the ſame that I eſſentially am and have; and every one may and ſhould be and become, what I am deſigned to be and to become. And ſhall I be indifferent to any one of my brethren; ſhall I conſider and treat any one of them as a perfect ſtranger to me? And ſhall they not all be dear to me; and are they not all deſerving of my eſteem and love? And ſhall not my heart yield a willing obedience to this great commandment of chriſtianity, which is at the ſame time the pure dictate of nature: Love thy neighbour as thyſelf?

Yes, the ſight of my fellow-creatures, and the thoughts of them procure me ſatisfaction and pleaſure. With complacency I behold them all, and take a cordial intereſt in them all. My heart yearns towards them as my brethren, and expands to the ſentiment that we all belong to one family, are all ſprung from one blood, are all children of the ſame earthly progenitor and of the ſame heavenly Father. Far from me be all coolneſs, all ſcorn, all envy towards any of my brothers and ſiſters on earth! No, I love them all, my ſoul rejoices in them all!

I rejoice that they are, and that they are what the creator called them to be; that they live, and have ſo many means and motives for enjoying their lives

and

and for triumphing in exiſtence; that they are ever ſpreading themſelves farther on the earth, that they are ever better employing all the fruits and productions of it, and that the ſenſitive and the ſpiritual life is ever improving among them. I rejoice in the glorious diſpoſitions of their nature, and the gradual developement and cultivation of them, in the vaſt abilities and capacities which they poſſeſs, in the various talents and endowments peculiar to them, and in all the good conſequences and effects which ſooner or later may be expected from them. I rejoice in every corporeal and mental beauty; every trace of intelligence, of wit, of ſagacity, of wiſdom, of kindneſs, every trial of courage and ſtrength; every germ of good ſentiments and actions; every lineament of the divine image, that I perceive in each and among them all. I rejoice in the diverſified, unwearied activity and diligence that animates them all; and whereby they all, each in his place and in his ſphere, attempt and achieve ſo much good. I rejoice in the intimate and generally uſeful connections in which they ſtand among themſelves and towards the whole human ſpecies; in the indiſſoluble complication of their common buſineſſes and occupations; and the conſiderable influence, every one, the laſt as well as the firſt, has on the welfare of all the reſt. — I rejoice in the manifold helps and ſervices which they, proximately and remotely, knowingly and unknowingly, afford me, and whereby they provide in numberleſs ways, for

my

my neceſſities, my accommodation, my pleaſure. — I rejoice in every ſatisfaction they enjoy; every comfort that refreſhes them; every hope that encourages them, every good conſequence of their undertakings and endeavours; every event, every ſource from whence they derive content and ſatisfaction. — I rejoice in every excellence that adorns them; every talent that diſtinguiſhes them; every ingenuity that is admired in them; every merit they acquire in their ſeveral ſtations and callings in behalf of ſociety. — I rejoice in their high deſtination, and in every larger or ſmaller ſtep by which they advance nearer to it; and when I think I ſee them all at the goal, and imagine them all in the future world, how they there, ſooner or later, each in his degree and according to his capacities, will be and do and enjoy that to which their father in heaven, has formed and educated, and will ſtill farther educate them: then I look with pure and undiſturbed delight, with bliſsful ſatisfaction, on them all, as God continually beholds them, and rejoice in the innumerable multitudes of brethren, who are deſigned for, and will partake with me in everlaſting life, in everlaſting happineſs.

Animated by theſe well founded ſatisfactions, I take the ſincereſt, moſt cordial intereſt in all that concerns them. Nothing that happens to them, nothing that they fear or hope, that they deſire and purſue, is foreign and indifferent to me. Their affairs are mine. Their joys are my joys: their ſorrows are my ſorrows. I heartily weep with them that

that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice. Not without intimate and deep compaſſion, do I ſee the ravages, deſolation and miſery, which error and folly, vice and tyranny commit upon the earth; not without grief do I hear the accounts of the dangers to which my brethren are expoſed, of the preſſures under which they groan, of the misfortunes and diſtreſſes that befall them. But with joyous gratitude I obſerve every acceſſion of light and knowledge, of wiſdom and virtue, of civil and religious liberty, that recreates mankind, my brethren, in nearer or in remoter regions, and announces better days to them and their poſterity.

And if I be thus diſpoſed; if I thus love all men as my neighbours: is it poſſible that my love can remain ſterile and inactive? No, this intimate and ſincere delight in my brethren, this cordial intereſt in all that concerns them, communicates to me at once both motive and ability to promote their welfare by every means within my power. Never will theſe ſentiments allow me, knowingly and deſignedly, to oppreſs, to circumvent, to injure, to moleſt, to inſult, any one of them, to rejoice in his misfortunes, or to envy him his ſucceſſes. Never ſhall I refuſe to ſhare with them my ſagacity, my abilities, my property, my authority, my ſatisfactions, in recompenſe for the good offices they do me. Never ſhall I yield to the inhuman temptation to diſturb them in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of their

their life, of their health, of their pleaſure, of their honour, of their property, their liberty, their virtue, and their piety, or to afflict and vex them in any way whatever. Never ſhall I account it real loſs, when I am obliged to ſacrifice any thing, to riſk any thing, to work, to bear, to ſuffer for them and their advantage. Never ſhall I require and expect more from them than, according to their capacities and circumſtances, I am juſtified in requiring and expecting; and even then not rigorouſly aſſert my rights, but give ſcope to forbearance and indulgence. But to make the beſt, the moſt beneficial uſe, of all that I am and have; to ſerve and aſſiſt my brethren to the utmoſt of my ability and ſkill; to alleviate as much as I can, every burden that oppreſſes them; to maintain and promote peace and harmony among them; to bring them all nearer in affection together, and ever to connect them more intimately with each other; and to diffuſe around me, mediately and immediately, as much light, as much comfort, as much ſatisfaction and joy, as, in the ſtation I fill, and in proportion to the abilities I poſſeſs, I can ever find means to do: this ſhall I hold to be my indiſpenſable duty, my greateſt glory: this will be the moving ſpring and the rule of my whole behaviour, the infallible conſequence of my chriſtian ſentiments.

And this, my dear friends, is univerſal charity; this is recommended to us by Jeſus, our lord and maſter;

maſter; this is recommended to us by nature and religion: Love thy neighbour as thyſelf. Happy we, if we be ſo diſpoſed! It is the diſpoſition of God, our heavenly father, and of his ſon, Jeſus, our captain and leader; the diſpoſition of all intelligent, virtuous beings who are ſtriving after perfection and happineſs. Yes, love, pure, generous, chriſtian charity, is and diſpenſes perfect happineſs on earth as well as in heaven; in this as in the future world.

SERMON XXI.

Motives to Univerſal Charity.

GOD, who loveſt us with more than parental tenderneſs, and haſt made it our duty and our felicity, to love one another as brethren: may we all more and more faithfully fulfill that duty and more completely enjoy that felicity, and thereby acquire a continually nearer and brighter reſemblance to thee. Yes, thou haſt formed us capable of that love, ſown the ſeed of it in our hearts, and given us the ſtrongeſt motives and impulſes, the moſt diverſified means to provide for its expanſion and fructification. Notwithſtanding which, this ſeed of virtue and happineſs ſtill lies unexpanded in ſuch numbers of human hearts! Still it produces in but few thoſe generous fruits which it might and is intended to produce. Ah but too ſeldom do we take man for what he is, and but ſeldom do we entertain ſuch ſentiments and form ſuch judgments of each other,

as

as truth and juſtice require. But too often we miſtake each other, and forget our natural conſanguinity, our common dignity, our preſent and future deſtination. But too often are our ſentiments and our conduct towards each other determined and governed by baſe and ſelfiſh paſſions. And thus are beings, whom according to thy parental views all conſiderations ſhould connect and bring nearer together, ſeparated and divided ever farther aſunder. And thus do we ourſelves foreclose and embitter innumerable ſources of ſatisfaction, which thou haſt opened to us, thy children, on earth, or even convert them into ſo many ſources of trouble and ſorrow. Moſt benevolent Father of mankind, teach us then more diſtinctly to perceive thy merciful and gracious deſigns upon us and to think and act more agreeably to them. Grant that we may more juſtly judge both of ourſelves and of mankind, our brethren; and learn to hold both ourſelves and them for what we really are. Open the avenues of our mind and our heart to the worthier, nobler conceptions, the grander proſpects that are given us by reaſon and religion concerning the nature and deſtination of man, and cauſe them to pervade us all with undiſſembled eſteem and affection for each other. Bleſs to this end the conſiderations in which we now propoſe to engage. Let them correct our notions, enlarge and augment our perceptions of theſe important objects, and inſpire us with ſuch emotions, as may render the diſcharge of our duty

a delight. We lift up our ſuppliant hands to thee in this behalf with the utmoſt confidence as thy children, and addreſs thee farther in the name and words of our lord: Our father, &c.

MATTH. xxii. 39.

And the ſecond is like unto it: Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.

CHARITY, or complacency and ſatisfaction in mankind, participation in their fortunes and inclination to benevolence and to beneficence, is natural to us and to all mankind. The ſight of whatever is beautiful and good makes agreeable impreſſions on us; we view, we contemplate it with ſatisfaction and pleaſure; we rejoice in it, unleſs our eyes are blinded and our judgment warped by ſordid and ſelfiſh paſſions. We are all diſpoſed to rejoice with the joyful and to weep with the mourner, unleſs our natural ſympathies are ſuppreſſed by envy or reſentment, unleſs our heart is hardened and reduces us for a longer or ſhorter time to downright barbarians. We all prefer the intercourſe with our brethren, the ſocial life, the enjoyment of ſocial joys and ſorrows, to a total ſecluſion and retirement from the world and mankind, unleſs ſome diſeaſe of the mind or body deter us from ſociety, and incapacitate us for their company

company and amuſements. Our heart rewards us with ſatisfaction and gladneſs, whenever we have done good to others; when we have afforded them ſervice and relief; and never are we perfectly at eaſe, when we are forced to accuſe ourſelves of a contrary behaviour. We have all often experienced, that love, pure, generous charity is and diſpenſes real felicity, that it enlarges and invigorates the heart, alleviates the burdens of life, and multiplies and heightens its ſatisfactions. And if religion and chriſtianity are not barren ideas to us, but real concerns of the heart, we muſt frequently have felt that their doctrines and obligations are more important, more eaſy, more conſolatory in proportion as we are animated by love, love towards God and man.

Natural however as charity is to man, yet ſeldom is it and does it achieve in him, all that it might be and achieve, becauſe but too often nature is left deſtitute of the aſſiſtance and nurture of reflection and exerciſe. Does this noble germ of virtue kindly thrive in the uncorrupted human heart, as in its native ſoil: it requires however to be diligently tended and foſtered, in order that it may take deep root in it, and not only bear beautiful bloſſoms, but yield ripe and delicious fruit. If it be ſuddenly blighted and killed by the breath of malignant paſſions, it languiſhes and fades more ſlowly indeed, but no leſs ſurely by the want of ſufficient nutriment and culture. Let us now, my dear friends, beſtow

upon this noble, paradiſaical plant that nutriment and culture of which it is in want. Let us ſee how and by what means we ſhould rouze ourſelves to the love of our neighbour, to general charity, or, what conſiderations we ſhould employ, in order to maintain, to nouriſh this love, ſo as to render it a preponderant, a ruling principle in our ſouls.

Thence we ſhall learn how we are to proceed in order to fulfil the precept of Jeſus in our text: love thy neighbour as thyſelf, as we lately propounded it.

Wouldſt thou love all mankind as thy brethren, o man, rejoice in them and think of them with complacency, ſay ſometimes to thyſelf: God loves them, he deſigns their good, he ſhowers his benefits upon them, he rejoices in them as the work of his hands, as his creatures, his children, he beholds them with complacency. From love he called them into being: from love he cauſes them to continue and to triumph in exiſtence. From love he has made ſuch grand, ſuch wonderful pre-arrangements for their preſervation, for their multiplication, for their growth, for their education and exerciſe, for the drawing forth of their capacities and powers, for the decoration and embelliſhment of their reſidence, for the enhancement and diverſification of gratifications and pleaſures among the inanimate and animate creatures, both in the natural and the moral world. From love he daily cauſes his ſun to riſe upon them and his rain to irrigate their fields. From love he decks

decks the ſpring with bloſſoms and flowers, and laviſhes on the ſummer and the autumn the choiceſt fruits in the greateſt variety and profuſion. From love he has blended agreeable ſenſations with the gratification of their wants, the accompliſhment of their duties, the exertion and application of their faculties, with labour as well as with reſt. From love he has placed them in ſuch cloſe relations and connections together, and rendered them ſo valuable, ſo uſeful, ſo indiſpenſable to each other. Love is even the foundation of all the troubles, the afflictions, the calamities, the chaſtenings and puniſhments which he cauſes them to bear and experience; for God is eſſential love, and all that he ordains, permits and does are effects of his love. Yes, he bleſſes, he loves them all, the leaſt and loweſt of the people, as well as the greateſt and mightieſt of the earth; the weak as well as the ſtrong, the bad as well as the good. They are all his children, bear his image upon them; are all relations and brethren of Jeſus, his firſt-born ſon. And if God loves them all, they muſt be of ſome value; they muſt all, more or leſs, in one reſpect or another, be amiable; they muſt all have ſomewhat of good or beautiful, ſomewhat that merits eſteem! And ſhall I not eſteem beings whom God eſteems; not love thoſe whom God loves? Shall I look down with coldneſs and contempt on any creature, to whom God vouchſafes his benevolence and bounty, which ſo viſibly teſtifies of his wiſdom and loving-kindneſs, and for whom

he has done and ſtill does ſo much? Shall I be aſhamed of any man, or deſpiſe any man, whom God owns as his child, whom Jeſus acknowledges for his brother, for whoſe ſake ſo many great and extraordinary events have been brought about both in the natural and in the moral world? Can I judge more equitably, can I think and act more nobly than by judging, thinking, and acting like God?

Wouldſt thou farther love all mankind as thy brethren, o man, rejoice in them all, and think on them with complacency and eſteem; in the judgment that thou paſſeſt on them, be not biaſſed either by the homelineſs of their figure, or the meanneſs of their apparel, or the humble ſituation in which they are placed, or by ſingle actions, fooliſh, or wicked, which they commit. Nothing of this detracts from the inherent worth of the man, his native grandeur and dignity, his eſſential excellencies. It may indeed tarniſh their luſtre, and conceal them from the eye of the careleſs, but not from the view of the more acute obſerver. That penetrates the ſhell, and diſcovers beneath it the grand, the reſpectable qualities, that are peculiar to the man as man. No, wouldſt thou learn to judge rightly of mankind and to rejoice in and to love them: never loſe ſight of their great natural diſpoſitions, their various, ſo promiſing and ſo productive capacities and powers, and their equally grand and glorious deſtination. Say often to thyſelf: how noble a creature is man, and how great his achievements,

and

and what may he not be and become and do and produce! To what a pitch may he not ſoar in his imagination! How much may he ſcan and comprehend with his intellect! What is there ſo great, ſo ſmall, ſo remote, ſo occult, ſo difficult, ſo ſublime, that is not or may not be an object of his reflection, of his inveſtigations, of his exertions? What treaſures of knowledge and perceptions, what admirable mental and mechanical aptitudes may he not acquire, and to what an immenſe extent may he not proceed in the accumulation of the former, and in the elevation and the application of the latter! Of what vaſt enterpriſes, of what noble achievements, of what ſhining virtues, of what heroic exploits, of what inſuperable ſtrength and fortitude is he not capable! How far around him may he not operate, and how much good may he not perform! How greatly beautify and animate the face of nature! How greatly diverſify her fertility, and promote her beneficial views! What comprehenſive, profound, complicated plans can he not form and execute! What diſtant, honourable deſigns, can he not propoſe, purſue, attain! What influence may he not have on the mind and the heart, the morals and the deportment of whole generations of men, of nations entire! What dominion may he not exerciſe over himſelf and numberleſs objects without him! How many ſatisfactions may he not enjoy himſelf and procure for others! What burdens can he not bear, without ſinking under them!

What ſufferings can he not endure, without being vanquiſhed by pain! With what unabated ardour, with what all-conquering perſeverance can he ſtrive after ever greater perfection! — And how grand, how glorious is his deſtination! What proſpects lie before him! Everlaſting continuance, everlaſting life, everlaſting activity, inceſſant increaſe in knowledge, in virtue, in happineſs! What encouragement to his hopes! What a light is thus thrown upon his preſent ſtate, in many reſpects ſo myſterious and incoherent! What a light upon his preſent limitations and defects, troubles and afflictions, upon the vaſt labyrinth of his contingencies and fortunes! What progreſs of the human race in general, what indemnification to ſo many conſiderable parts and individual members of it does it not allow us to expect!

And all theſe diſpoſitions, my dear friends, all theſe capacities and powers, this exalted deſtination, theſe grand proſpects are proper to man as ſuch, of whatever rank he is, to whatever country he belongs, to whatever ſtate of culture and improvement he has arrived or not, in whatever more contracted or extended circle he here moves and acts. All theſe advantages, the whole of this dignity of human nature in eſſentials the child has in common with the man, the wicked with the good, the dweller in the moſt ſavage wilderneſs with the inhabitant of the moſt poliſhed city, the illitera·e with the learned, my enemy with my friend, my oppreſſor with my benefactor. Indeed they are not expanded and exhibited

exhibited with all to the ſame extent, and in the ſame beneficial or reſplendent manner. Indeed in numbers they remain only in the ſeed, which here neither bloſſoms nor bears fruit. Indeed every one does not employ his capacities and powers to my benefit and that of the public. Indeed the abuſe of theſe great capacities and powers has very frequently been attended with prodigious havoc and devaſtation, with a variety of woe. But do they therefore ceaſe to be what they are? Are they therefore of leſs magnitude, leſs noble, leſs admirable, leſs ſhining characteriſtics of what man is and what he is deſigned to be and to become? Is man as man deſerving therefore of leſs reſpect? Does the diamond then loſe its whole value becauſe it is not yet poliſhed and does not ſparkle? Will the creator then leave his work unfiniſhed? Can he ever fail of his purpoſes? Can it be ſuppoſed that any diſpoſition will always remain diſpoſition in his empire, that any capacity will remain merely capacity? Will any power not at laſt perform that which it is deſigned to perform? And if I thus view, thus conſider mankind: how grand, how eſtimable muſt they not all appear to me? With what complacency muſt I not think on them! What reaſons do I not find for rejoicing in them! What motives for embracing them as brethren with benevolence and affection!

Wouldſt thou thirdly, my chriſtian brother, awaken and confirm in thy ſoul the principle of love, inward,

inward, cordial love towards all mankind, as towards thy neighbours: frequently revolve in thy mind the various and generally useful connections, in which they all stand with thee and with human society at large. Not one is entirely useless, or absolutely and in all respects injurious to society, and no one can or will be so at all times and in every situation. No one is absolutely destitute of all good qualities, or uniformly commits bad actions. Everyone is a serviceable, necessary link of the great, the endless chain of things; everyone fills a certain place in it and thereby promotes the connection and evolution of the whole. Everyone contributes, directly or indirectly, his share to thy benefit and that of the public. How many things wouldst thou be obliged to forego were it not for their assistance! And how numerous the advantages for which thou art beholden to them! Now, while we are discoursing together upon it, my dear friends, and are enjoying the pleasure of calm reflection, now thousands and thousands of persons near and afar off, in all the corners of the earth, are occupied for us all and for everyone of us in particular. Some are exerting their corporeal, others their intellectual faculties for us. One is providing for our necessities, another for our conveniency, a third for our entertainment, a fourth for our security and repose, others again for our information and moral improvement. Here one of our brethren is tilling the field, whence we are to

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derive nouriſhment; there another is tending the flocks, whoſe wool is to cover us, or the worm, whoſe artificial web is to adorn us; yonder a third is dreſſing the vines, whoſe juice is to ſtrengthen and refreſh us. Here one is ſowing good ſeed for us; there another is reaping the ripe fruits for us. Here one is preparing theſe fruits for our moſt convenient uſe and enjoyment; there others are bringing them from the remoteſt regions, along toilſome and dangerous roads, into our barns and ſtore-houſes, into our dwellings, to our tables. Here one is wandering over trackleſs heaths, acroſs the ſwampy moor, the ſolitary deſert, or the howling wilderneſs; there another is buffeted by the ſtormy billows; there others again are diving into the bowels of the earth, in order to enrich us with treaſures of various kinds. Here are innumerable beauties of nature, there the moſt diverſified works of art, which without the induſtry and the aſſiſtance of our brethren we could neither have, nor know, nor uſe, nor enjoy. Think only, my dear friends, how many thouſand heads and hands are daily and hourly employed for us, in order to prepare and procure for us whatever pertains to our food and cloathing, to our ornament, to our houſehold furniture, to the carrying on of our buſineſs, to our pleaſure, to our inſtruction. Never can we ſatisfy the leaſt exigence of our mind or body, never ſucceſsfully purſue and attain any beneficial purpoſe, never

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rejoice and be glad in our lives, never advance our perfection and happineſs, without being for the moſt part obliged to other perſons for it. What a ſum total of important, eſſential ſervices therefore are we inceſſantly receiving from them! How great the ſacrifices they daily make to us! How numerous the troubles, the dangers to which they expoſe themſelves on our account! Indeed the generality of all this they do without knowing us, without having our particular benefit in view; they do it very often from motives of ſelf-intereſt, from vanity, for the ſupply of their own wants, from the natural impulſe to action. However, they do it, we receive this aſſiſtance, theſe good offices from them, we enjoy the fruits of them; we could not be deprived of them, without being more or leſs wretched. Therefore how cloſe and indiſſoluble are the ties by which we are united together! How intricately are our concerns and our fortunes interwoven together! And ſhall I daily and hourly receive ſo many, ſuch great benefits from all my brethren on earth, from ſtrangers as well as from acquaintance, from the remoteſt as well as from the neareſt; ſhall I feel myſelf comfortable and happy in the diverſified enjoyment of their labour, their induſtry, their aſſiſtance, and yet be indifferent towards any of them; and yet ſhall I treat any one of them as an alien, in whom I am not at all concerned? And ſhall I not exult in their exiſtence, their abilities, their ſeveral kinds of ſkill

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and dexterity, their ſo uſeful connections with me: and among themſelves, not embrace them all with brotherly kindneſs?

Wouldſt thou laſtly, o man, o chriſtian, excite and cheriſh in thy heart this univerſal charity: judge, eſteem thy brethren, mankind, not merely by what at preſent, in this their infant ſtate, they are and afford, but by what in all future times on every higher ſtep of their exiſtence they may and will be and afford. Indeed but few perſons are as yet entirely that, which according to their nature and their predispoſitions they may and are adapted to be and become. As yet but few do and afford all that they are able to do and to afford. As yet not one is completely formed, completely educated; not one is ſo intelligent, ſo wiſe, ſo good, and ſo diligent in good, as he would be capable of being in more favourable connections and circumſtances. Still whole countries and populations are covered with clouds and thick darkneſs. Still millions of the human ſpecies have no adequate perception of their dignity, their deſtination, their energies. Still as great a number abuſe them by folly and ſin. But that, my dear friends, which they are not at preſent, they may and are deſigned hereafter, ſooner or later, to become. That which at preſent they are unable to do and to afford, they may and will in the ſucceſſive periods of their ſuperior exiſtence do and afford. To the ſtate of infancy and childhood ſucceeds the ſtate of the riper, virile age; to the

preparatory and ſcholaſtic years the years of active and ſocial life. Their career is immenſe, their powers unfold only by degrees and are capable of an ever progreſſive enlargement. Judge of the former, not by the ſhort ſpace which they have now run through, nor of the latter by the firſt, weak eſſays, they now make with them. The eternity for which they are all deſigned, how rich, how inexhauſtible muſt it be in means of exerciſe, of diſcipline, of accompliſhment!

Thus it is, my dear friends! He who would open the avenues of his heart to univerſal charity, who would ſincerely exult in all mankind as his brethren, ſhould not ſtop ſhort at the preſent moment, at the firſt, the lowermoſt ſtep of their exiſtence, not take this ſhort life, ſtrewn with ſo many hardſhips and troubles, ſullied by ſo many follies and crimes and vices, for the whole of their deſtination. In that caſe he could perhaps exult in but a few of his brethren, diſcern in but few of them much of the elevated and amiable, contemplate and treat only few with real inward complacency. In that caſe he would probably ſee far greater reaſon one while to arm himſelf againſt their malice, then to lament their iniquities, then to weep over their miſery. In that caſe, which ever way he turned his eyes, he would perceive nothing but diſorder and confuſion, pure inconſiſtency, ineffectual preparations, unſucceſsful attempts, unexecuted plans, diſappointed expectations, mere fragments and ruins of an unfiniſhed edifice. No, ſhall the ſight of mankind be gladdening to thee, o man,

ſhall thy heart enfold them with ſincere affection; connect the preſent with the future, time with eternity; accompany in imagination thy brethren up all the ſucceeding gradations of their exiſtence and their life through all the periods and revolutions of future worlds, and repreſent to thyſelf their gradual, their infinitely progreſſive expanſion, their continual approximation to ſuperior perfection, and then conſider what, by means of their natural diſpoſitions and capacities and powers by little and little from everlaſting to everlaſting, they may be and become and afford and enjoy. How majeſtic, how reſpectable will every perſon afterwards appear to thee! What eſteem, what affection will he demand of thee! How inſtantaneouſly will all thoſe circumſtances diſappear which now perhaps alienate thee from him, or cauſe thee to regard him with coldneſs, with contempt, with diſlike!

Yes, when I raiſe my thoughts into futurity, I behold the image of deity very differently reſplendent in man, and him very differently aſſerting his lineage from God and his fellowſhip with him. There I behold the child matured into the man, the feeble ſtrengthened by exerciſe, the wicked corrected by want and woe, the good confirmed, the ſcholar employed in the happieſt application of the knowledge and attainments which coſt him ſo much labour to acquire, and the novice in the hand of the accompliſhed advancing with continually increaſing ſpeed to his perfection. There I behold perſons,

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who here, overpowered by buſineſſes and cares, were ſcarcely able to raiſe their minds above viſible objects, and while cultivating with labour and ſweat the ungrateful earth, had neither leiſure nor inducement to provide for the culture of their minds, theſe I there behold exerting their nobler intellectual faculties in all their vigour and ſoaring with no leſs indefatigable ardour than good ſucceſs from one degree of knowledge and wiſdom to another. There I behold others, who here moved and operated in a contracted circle, but faithfully fulfilled their duty in it, advanced over many others, tranſlated into a much larger ſphere of action, promoting the ſatisfaction and welfare of thouſands, and making the nobleſt, the moſt general uſe of all that they are in themſelves and have ability for. There I behold the wretch, the captive, the innocent ſufferer, him that was depreſſed and cramped by outward circumſtances and the combinations of the whole, forgetting his calamities, and rejoicing in the ample indemnifications and retributions which the father of mankind had prepared for him in a better world. There I behold every prediſpoſition evolving, every capacity expanding, every faculty exerting itſelf agreeably to its deſign; I ſee every experience of the former life turned to account, every fault of it recogniſed and repaired, every germ of virtue fructified, every bud of wiſdom blown, every good inclination confirmed and followed, every uſeful, good attainment brought into practice. There I behold

behold all, in various ways and in various degrees, becoming gradually always more intelligent, always better, always happier, and everyone thus communicating to another always more felicity and delight. Yes, there perhaps he whom I had no eſteem for here, who ſeemed to be far below me, will be my teacher, my guide. There ſhall I perhaps enter into the moſt intimate and happy connections with erſons whom at preſent I know not, who are ſtrangers to me, who are ſeparated from me by great intervals of time and ſpace, and labour hand in hand with them in gaining ſuperior attainments. There perhaps he, whom I here thought I had no need of, will afford me the moſt important, the moſt eſſential ſervices and be my principal benefactor. There perhaps he whom I here envied and hated, will be of great benefit to me, and open to me ſources of pleaſure, which but for him would have remained ſhut up againſt me. Yes, there ſhall I live for ever with all, whatever here they may be in reality or appearance, and rejoice for ever with them in my exiſtence and my life. And perſons who may and are deſigned to be and to become all this; perſons who will hereafter ſtand in ſuch relations towards me: ſhall I pretend not to know under any garb, in any form and figure? Shall I not regard them with complacency? Shall I not rejoice in them? Theſe companions in my future perfection and happineſs, theſe partners in my future ſuperior occupations and delights, ſhall they be indifferent and alien

to me? Shall I not feel a real eſteem, a ſincere benevolence for them? Shall I not love them, as my brethren, as my neighbours, in deed and in truth?

Moſt aſſuredly, my dear friends, when once we have rendered theſe ideas perfectly familiar to our minds by frequently engaging in ſuch meditations, and have opened the avenues of our heart to their efficacy, a ſincere, pure, generous philanthropy will infallibly become a ruling principle within us, and have a no leſs certain than conſiderable influence on all our judgments and actions. We ſhall perceive no human being, converſe with no human being, whom we ſhall not be forced to eſteem on more than one acount, in more than one reſpect, in whom we ſhall not ſee cauſe to rejoice, in whoſe fortunes we ſhall not take a friendly intereſt. We ſhall thus accuſtom ourſelves never to view them partially, but to conſider them on all their ſides and in the whole extent of their nature and deſtination. They will preſent themſelves to us in a totally different light, in the light in which God, their creator and father, ſees them, and in which we ſhall all certainly view them in the future world. And how totally different ſhall we thus judge of their excellencies and defects, of their ſorrows and joys, of their actions and the events that befall them! With how much more ſerenity of mind, with how much more gladneſs of heart ſhall we behold them and think of them! How many cauſes o ill-humour,

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of trouble, of diſcontent, of ſhyneſs and averſion will thus be done away! How many ſources of joy and felicity will open around us! Yes, let theſe ideas, theſe conſiderations continually animate and govern thy conduct, o man, o chriſtian, and ſo wilt thou avoid innumerable dark and dreary deviations and mazes in thought and deed, render thy path of life eaſy and pleaſant, and boldly ſee the end of it approaching both in regard to thyſelf and all thy brethren.

SERMON XXII.

The cordial Intereſt in the Events that befall our Fellow-creatures.

GOD, who art in every ſenſe the father of all thy offspring both in heaven and on earth, we thy human progeny are likewiſe authoriſed to call thee by that tender appellation, for thou acknowledgeſt and loveſt us as thy children, and provideſt for us all with paternal tenderneſs and care. We all together form but one large family, wiſely and affectionately maintained and governed by thee and brought up and prepared in various ways to a progreſſively higher perfection and happineſs. Thou aſſigneſt to every one of us the poſt which he is to fill in thy domain, and the road whereby he is to arrive at his appointment. But it is alſo thy will that we ſhould work together at the attainment of thy deſigns, and ſhare in common the ſatisfactions as well as the hardſhips which we meet with on our

way. To this end haſt thou ſo intimately connected us with each other and implicated our fortunes ſo inſeparably together, that no one can be either happy or miſerable for himſelf alone. It is thus that thou wouldſt inſpire us with truly fraternal ſentiments towards each other and fill us with tender emotions of humanity, of compaſſion, of officiouſneſs and beneficence. Oh do thou thyſelf expand more and more our hearts to theſe generous ſentiments and emotions. Let them entirely pervade us, let them become perfectly natural to us and ſo predominant in our breaſts, that they may always maintain the ſuperiority over every ſuggeſtion of pride, of envy, of jealouſy, of all ſelfiſh views. Grant that we may take a cordial intereſt in whatever relates to our brethren, that we may have a lively feeling of their proſperity and their adverſity, and promote the former by every means, but endeavour to avert and alleviate the latter as much as in us lies. Faſhion us in this manner, merciful, heavenly father, according to thy mind, and cauſe us to acquire from day to day a greater conformity and likeneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, our ſaviour, whom thou haſt propoſed as a pattern to us. Bleſs to this end the conſiderations on which we purpoſe now to enter. Give efficacy to their admonitions concerning our ſtrict relation and connection with one another, that they may warm our hearts with truly charitable ſentiments and affections. We offer up theſe our requeſts unto thee in the name of thy ſon, our

mediator and redeemer, who in pity to our infirmities and wants, taught us to addreſs thee thus: Our father, &c.

ROM. xii. 15.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

CHRISTIANITY has ſometimes been repreſented as a doctrine that renders us inſenſible to all that paſſes without us, contracts our ſphere of action, weakens the bands of ſociety, and ſo fixes our thoughts and affections on the future and unſeen, that we are therefore forced as it were to forget the preſent and temporal or at leaſt to view it without participation or concern. Thence aroſe the numerous orders of monks and hermits, who under the pretence of withdrawing from all intercourſe and communication with the ſinful world, at the ſame time withdrew all affection and ſervice from their brethren, and thus became uſeleſs or even pernicious citizens and fanatical chriſtians. Thence aroſe and thence ſtill ariſes that gloomy, anxious, ſuperſtitious piety and devotion, which ſcorns and condemns whatever has no immediate relation to religion and to futurity, which is ſo auſtere and unjuſt in its judgments, as to pronounce the moſt indifferent actions to be crimes, the moſt innocent amuſements

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to be ſinful extravagancies, and all the finer ſenſibilities of the human heart to be weakneſſes. But the chriſtian doctrine, as it is contained in the writings of the evangeliſts and apoſtles, is by no means deſerving of this reproach. Theſe eccentricities of the human intellect, theſe miſanthropical ſentiments and actions, ought not certainly to be laid to its account. The whole ſcope and tendency of it is rather directly the reverſe. Its profeſſed deſign is gradually to break down the wall of partition which the divers opinions and ceremonies of religion had erected between nations and people, to teach them more juſtly to eſtimate the worth of theſe objects, and to unite them in one body, in one ſociety, which ſhould worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, that is with reaſon and ſincerity. It has no intention to contract our hearts and to weaken our ſenſibility. No, its deſign is to enlarge the former and render the latter more acute and efficacious. It would intereſt us in all ſurrounding objects, make us ſenſible to them all, and connect us together by ties ſo numerous and ſtrong, that nothing could happen to any of us, but all the reſt muſt participate therein; and thus chriſtianity would form us into one ſole family of brothers and ſiſters who might prove truly agreeable to their heavenly father by the brotherly love and concord that ſhould prevail among them. Can ſhe not produce theſe bleſſed effects in all; ſhe always however attains this end in a larger or ſmaller proportion of perſons, whom we there-

fore may conſider as the ſalt and the light of the earth, and who are as it were the moderators, whereby the reſt are kept together, and the order and harmony of the whole preſerved. How energetic are the exhortations, which the apoſtle addreſſes to us in this particular! "Bear ye, ſays he, one another's burdens." "Look not every man on his own things, but alſo on the things of others." "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace;" and in our text: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." What other meaning can theſe precepts have, than, be not indifferent towards the good and the ill that betides others; treat it not as a matter with which you have nothing to do, but as ſomewhat that concerns you much, and take by all means a cordial intereſt in it. Let us therefore take occaſion from theſe words to conſider the ſocial, cordial intereſt in the good and ill that befalls others. To this end we will firſt point out what we are to do, and how we are to be diſpoſed, for taking a cordial intereſt in the proſperous or adverſe contingences of our fellow-creatures; and then, how we ſhould expreſs and manifeſt this participation by our words and works.

Would we rejoice with the joyful and weep with the ſorrowful, or, would we take a cordial intereſt in the good and ill that happens to other perſons,

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we ſhould before all things ſeriouſly conſider in what a vaſt variety of ways mankind are connected together, and how great an influence the happineſs or the misery of one has upon the happineſs or the misery of others. We ſhould therefore call to mind, how many things we poſſeſs in common, and how much more important theſe things are, than thoſe whereby we are diſtinguiſhed from each other. We have all the ſame rational, immortal nature, the ſame origin and the ſame deſtination. We are all children of the ſame heavenly father, who has formed us all after his own image, preſerves and provides for us all and deſigns the good of us all. We are likewiſe obnoxious to the ſame wants, infirmities, paſſions, errors, follies and failings, and the greater or leſs degree in which we are obnoxious to theſe evils, depends not ſo much on our behaviour and on our deſerts, as on the circumſtances in which the ruler of the world has placed us. We are in ſhort all capable of the ſame virtues, and of a continually progreſſive improvement and perfection. And what is now that which diſtinguiſhes us from each other? How inſignificant is it in compariſon of what is common to us all! That the complexion of one is more, of another leſs white or black; that one ſpeaks this, another a different language; that one feeds, cloaths and carries himſelf in one manner, another in another; that one is addicted to one ſet of manners, cuſtoms, opinions, errors, perceptions and propenſities, another to another; that one attains to a higher

higher ſtage of knowledge and perfection, and the other remains at a lower: theſe are for the moſt part diſtinctions purely accidental, ariſing principally from the nature of the country, the mode of living, the education, the form of government and other external circumſtances of the people. But do they therefore ceaſe to be men, do they ceaſe to be our brethren? Can or ſhould theſe differences weaken or diſſolve the ties of affinity, and the ſocial benefit, that connect us all together? Are there not ſimilar diſcrepancies even between the children of one father, who were born and brought up in the ſame houſe? Let a man therefore live where he will, and be called how he will, whether he wrap his body in the ſkin of a beaſt or dreſs himſelf in ſilk, whether he gain a livelihood by the fiſhery, or by the chace, or by huſbandry, or by commerce and the arts, whether he dwell in the frozen regions of the north, or in the fertile countries of the eaſt and ſouth, whether he worſhip God according to the doctrine of Jeſus, or according to the commandments of Moſes, according to the precepts of Confucius or Mohammed, he is yet our relation, who poſſeſſes in common with us all that conſtitutes man, with whom we are connected in various ways, and to whoſe fortunes we ſhould be the leſs indifferent, as they may even have an influence on our own. Indeed the connections between perſons ſituated near together, are more various and ſtrict, and theſe likewiſe we ſhould conſider and feel, if we would rejoice with them that rejoice,

rejoice, and weep with them that weep. As inhabitants of one country, of one town, we have ſtill more objects in common. We have the ſame ſovereign, the ſame magiſtrates, the ſame laws, the ſame teachers and guides: we enjoy the ſame climate and weather, the ſame kinds of food, the ſame public or private diverſions and entertainments: we bear the ſame burdens and inconveniences: we have the ſame cuſtoms and manners: we are in many reſpects obnoxious to the ſame perils: we are in numerous regards actuated by the ſame hopes or fears; and in reſpect to theſe ſeveral objects no extraordinary alteration can happen, but we or thoſe belonging to us muſt be affected by it. And what a various, what a palpable influence has the happineſs or the miſery of others upon our happineſs and our miſery! No ſooner does ſome one branch of traffic fail, or any kind of trade begin to decline, but all the other branches of traffic and all other kinds of trade are affected by it. They all together compoſe one complicated machine, conſiſting of numerous wheels and ſprings, which is diſturbed and ſtopped in its courſe and its effects, whenever any wheel ſtands ſtill, or moves tardily, or one of the ſprings has loſt its elaſticity. Whenever the proſperity of a nation, of a country, of a town increaſes or declines, the proſperity likewiſe of the individuals who belong to that nation, that country, that town, muſt augment or decline. Whenever the merchant meets with great misfortunes abroad, generally ſpeaking,

ſpeaking, his correſpondents at home are directly or indirectly ſufferers thereby. If commerce languiſhes, the artiſt, the mechanic, the tradeſman will want employment, the earnings of the day-labourer will diminiſh, and if all theſe are obliged to obſerve a ſtricter œconomy, the countryman will reap leſs profit from his labour and induſtry. If ſcarcity and dearth prevail in neighbouring countries, the home proviſion will be more quickly conſumed and leſs eaſily ſupplied. If war, tempeſts, earthquakes and diſeaſe commit ravages in regions ſo far remote as ſcarcely to be known even by name, all mediate or immediate communication with thoſe parts is interrupted, their products both of nature and induſtry, are either not at all, or far later, in ſmaller quantities and at a higher price exported to other countries, and thouſand of hands, heretofore employed in raiſing, ſelling and manufacturing theſe articles, are now idle. Thus all is linked together. Thus may occurrences that happen thouſands of leagues off, affect our proſperity or our adverſity, and the joy or the ſorrow that takes its riſe in the hut of the American, or among the tents of the Tartars, extend its influence even to our habitations. And ſhall it not likewiſe find acceſs to our hearts, and move us to participate in the ſituation of thoſe who are ſo intimately connected with us, and who in general can be neither fortunate nor unfortunate, but that we ourſelves muſt, more or leſs, at preſent or in future, be gainers or loſers by it?

Would

Would we farther rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep, would we take a cordial intereſt in the good and ill that happens to others; we muſt underſtand the good and the ill that befalls them, that which occaſions them joy or ſorrow. We muſt therefore pay attention not only to what paſſes among our friends or acquaintance, or in the place and the country where we happen to live, but likewiſe to what is going forward in the reſt of the great world, in order to form juſt and lively conceptions of it. We muſt at times tranſport ourſelves in idea, to other, more diſtant climes and people, and endeavour to enlarge our views and our ſentiments in this particular. Not merely from curioſity, not ſimply for paſtime; but for ſtudying the ſtate of the whole ſociety whereof we are members, the whole family to which we belong, and in ſo doing to ſupport and invigorate our humanity. As we keep up in thought an intercourſe with abſent friends and relations, as we frequently with inward participation figure to ourſelves their circumſtances, their ſituation, their conduct, convey ourſelves in imagination into their company and converſe with them, ſo may we alſo have communication with diſtant nations and people, and thereby become animated by brotherly ſentiments towards them. Indeed to this end ſome kinds of knowledge are neceſſary, which every perſon has not, and which every perſon cannot poſſeſs. But this is one great advantage of the well-informed and enlightened man

and

and chriſtian, and this advantage, if we have it, we ſhould in a manner transfer from the mind to the heart, or employ in the ſolitary hours devoted to meditation and virtuous emotions in gaining a cloſer connection with all our brethren whereſoever diſperſed over the face of the earth, and in indulging the effuſions of human and chriſtian affection. How many opportunities and motives will then occur to the chriſtian philanthropiſt to rejoice with them that rejoice and to weep with them that weep, as he perceives in one place innocent, ſimple manners, few wants, rude, but real and heartfelt ſatisfactions, in another poliſhed, but leſs innocent manners, numerous wants, but likewiſe means as numerous for ſupplying them, more diverſified and exquiſite, but perhaps therefore the more dangerous, amuſements; if he here behold the light of knowledge, of the ſciences and of true religion making progreſs, and there ſtill the clouds of ignorance, of ſuperſtition and error hanging heavily over a country; if he here ſee courage, liberty, generous ſentiments, there puſillanimity, bondage and a ſervile diſpoſition prevail; if he in this place hear a happy people rejoicing in the bleſſings of the harveſt, or the vintage, or an abundant capture of fiſh, and yonder another groaning beneath the ſword of the deſtroyer or under the arrows of peſtilence; if he here contemplate the induſtrious, laborious, patient Chineſe meditating on the doctrines of his ſages or the feats of his anceſtors, and there the fickle, quarrelſome, ran-

rancorous Arab going forth for the purpoſes of murder and rapine; if he here diſcern one of his brethren whom neither birth nor riches have rendered illuſtrious, riſing to the chief poſts of honour by dint of merit alone, and yonder another, formed of the ſame materials with him, forcibly raviſhed from his native country and ſold for a ſlave. What nouriſhment for the feeling heart of the friend of humanity, when he thus viſits in fancy the dwellings, the palaces and the cottages of his nearer and remoter brethren, conſiders their natural and moral endowments, troubles, occupations, joys and ſorrows, repreſents to himſelf as far as he is able the ſtate of the whole family to which he likewiſe belongs, and then perceives ſo many hundreds, ſo many thouſands of them, wherever he turns his view, occupied for him, for his neceſſities, or for his accommodation and his pleaſure. — Is he however unable or unwilling to travel in his imagination ſo far; yet vivid repreſentations of what paſſes in his place, among his neighbours, in his diſtrict, will warm his heart to charity, and one while inſpire him with joy, at another bring tears into his eyes. When he here perceives the happy parents of a family ſurrounded by their innocent, healthy, frolicſome, hopeful children, and there diſcord, vice, indigence, ſickneſs and miſery diſturbing domeſtic happineſs; when in this place he hears the artificer, wearied with his day's work, but delighted in having finiſhed it, ſinging his rude lays as he ſits

down to his evening repaſt and in another the emaciated and hungry poor crying for bread; when he here beholds one of his brethren proceeding on the road of wiſdom and virtue to ſucceſſive degrees of perfection, and there another ſinking deeper and deeper in the miry ſlough of vice, and inſenſibly advancing towards perdition; when he here ſees the picture of innocence, of health, of content and good humour, there the expreſſion of pain, of melancholy, of envy, of jealouſy, of the ſtings of conſcience in the countenance of his fellow creatures; if here the rejoicings at the birth of a child or on account of another that is ſnatched from death delight his ears and there they are aſſailed by woeful lamentations over the lifeleſs corſe of one carried off by premature decay; if he here deſcries wiſdom, there folly, here virtue, there vice, here plenty, there want, here alacrity and life, there heavineſs, ſorrow and death; and then conſiders himſelf as cloſely connected with all theſe perſons and their ſeveral fortunes, and then conceives them to be, what they really are, brothers and ſiſters to him: how is it poſſible for him to remain unmoved and cold? How is it poſſible for him to refrain from rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep?

In order to this, my pious hearers, we muſt therefore thirdly take a real intereſt in the good and ill that befalls others. We muſt conſider their welfare and their illfare, their joys and ſorrows, their proſpe-

proſperous or diſaſtrous adventures not as objects irrelative to us, and about which it would be abſolute folly in us to be either glad or ſorry, becauſe we perhaps can diſcern only an exceeding remote connection, or even none at all, between their ſituations and ours. Here the ungenerous, illiberal temper of many perſons is plainly apparent. If we are ſpeaking of ſome diſtant or perhaps of ſome neighbouring country, of ſome foreigner, and we are informed that ſomething agreeable or ſomething adverſe has happened to this country or this perſon; is it propoſed to lend ſome aſſiſtance to this country or to this perſon, we hear too often in reply: What is that to us? Let them mind their own affairs! Thank heaven that I do not live in that country! I am glad that I have no connection with that man! I have enough to do to take care of myſelf! Every one for himſelf and God for us all! — Unhappy being, whom nothing moves except what relates to thy own particular perſon or at moſt to thy neareſt relatives and friends! What haſt thou human beſides thy outward form? A ſolitary deſart, an uninhabited iſland would better ſuit thy hard, unfeeling heart and better conceal thy infamy, than the ſociety of perſons, who are all thy equals, all thy brothers and ſiſters, and yet whoſe fates and fortunes make no more impreſſion on thee, than if they were beings of a quite different ſpecies and greatly thy inferiors. The total privation of the ſeveral eſſential ſervices, which he with the coldeſt ingratitude is daily re-

ceiving from them, would probably teach him to ſet a juſter value on thoſe things, and excite in him ſentiments of good will towards thoſe who beſtow or are able to beſtow them upon him. No, the friend of humanity, the ſincere chriſtian entertains quite different ſentiments. To him no man is a perfect ſtranger, let him be called how he may, and be who he will. He is a man, thinks he, and therefore my brother, my boſom friend, however different his complexion, his language, his garb, his manners, his cuſtoms may be from mine. The blood of our common progenitor flows in his veins as well as in mine, far as we may both be removed from the primitive ſource. That reaſon which elevates us above all the other creatures of the earth, ennobles him as it does me, however different the degree of its culture and the nature of its effects. That immortality which is my glory, is likewiſe the portion of his inheritance, rendering us both capable of an everlaſtingly progreſſive aſcent, and in the viewleſs tracts of futurity may place us yet in the moſt diverſified and intimate connections. That God, in ſhort, who is my father, is alſo his father, and if that exalted being attends to my concerns and loves me, he attends to the concerns of this my brother and loves him alſo, for with him is no reſpect of perſons. And ſhall it not gladden me, when it fares well with creatures, who are ſo nearly related to me? Shall I behold their proſperity and their ſatisfaction with indifferent or even with envious and

jealous

jealous eyes? Shall I not join with them in thankſgiving to our common father in heaven, when he does them good, when he reſcues them from danger and diſtreſs, when he bleſſes them in various ways? And ſhall I be unaffected and inſenſible at the ſight of creatures who are ſo nearly related to me in a ſtate of ſuffering? Shall my heart not ache when I perceive want and miſery in their dwellings, trouble and grief in their countenances, and tears in their eyes? Shall I not join in prayer with them, and run to their relief, when they are imploring relief of God and man? No, their joys are my joys, their ſorrows are my ſorrows, their proſperity or their adverſity is very cloſely connected with mine. Thus thinks the charitable chriſtian. Such are his ſentiments reſpecting the good or ill that befalls others. And ſuch, my pious hearers, are the reflections that we muſt make, the information that we muſt poſſeſs and employ, the ſentiments and feelings that we muſt excite and cheriſh in our breaſts, in order that we may comply with the exhortation of the apoſtle in our text, to rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

We will now proceed briefly to ſhew how we ſhould expreſs and evince, both in word and deed, our cordial participation in the good and ill that befalls others, particularly towards thoſe with whom we are acquainted and nearly connected.

That we way rejoice with them that rejoice, we ſhould not diſapprove, not condemn, not ſcare

away their joy, if it be but rational and innocent, by dark looks and churliſh geſtures, not cenſure it as being incompatible with virtue and godlineſs. No, virtue and joy, godlineſs and vivacity are the moſt natural, the moſt intimate friends and aſſociates, they may and ought always to be inſeparable companions, and they would be ſo, were they not ſo frequently put aſunder by error and prejudice, by a defective education, an infirm, emaciated body, a peeviſh and fretful temper. Even gravity and good humour may well ſubſiſt together, and both would be far more rational, far leſs ſubject to changes, far more uſeful, and far more ſecure from all extravagances, if they always accompanied each other.

Neither ſhould we kill or diminiſh the joy of others, by requiring that it ſhould always be exactly proportionate to the value of the objects at which they rejoice, and indeed to the worth that we attribute to them. Joy is a matter of ſenſation, and the feelings admit not of being rigidly reſtricted to thoſe regulations which cold-hearted philoſophers lay down for them. The criterion likewiſe by which we judge of the value of objects varies too much. It is determined by the age, the flow of ſpirits, the wants, the expectations, the rarity, the extrinſic circumſtances, the cauſes, the conſequences, in ſhort the medium in which it is held. The child, the youth, the man, the old man, ſee the ſame agreeable event, enjoy the ſame pleaſure, rejoice in it, but every one in his own way and in due proportion.

Would

Would we rejoice with them that rejoice, let us rather put ourſelves in their ſituation, view the good and agreeable that happens to them, as it were with their eyes, and in this reſpect too become all things to all men. Joy, rational, temperate joy, which only refreſhes and exhilarates, without intoxicating the mind, which is grounded on no baſe ſcheme or act, but expands the heart to every charitable, beneficent affection; ſuch a joy is by far too precious and too rare a boon, for us to be warranted in diſturbing a man in the enjoyment of it, even though it ſhould be not quite ſo well-founded in our opinion and according to our feelings, or even rather extravagant.

On the contrary, would we rejoice with them that rejoice, we ſhould revolve again and again with them the benefits which they enjoy, the ſucceſs and fortunate occurences that have turned up, the bright proſpects they have before them, expatiate with them over every circumſtance that may enhance their worth, call their attention to thoſe other circumſtances or agreeable conſequences, which they may poſſibly have overlooked, expreſs our ſatisfaction in them, in the moſt natural and cordial manner; by no means trouble them with unſeaſonable complaints of our leſs fortunate ſituation or our miſery, and lift up our hearts with theirs to God, the father of lights, the author of happineſs; and thus endeavour to ſanctify our mutual joy, and render it ſtill more lively.

Would we laſtly be of the number of ſuch as rejoice with them that rejoice, we ſhould ſhew it in action or by works. We ſhould try to promote the ſatisfaction and happineſs of others by all manner of means. We ſhould furniſh them with reaſons of joy and ſatisfaction by the ſervices we afford them, by the complaiſance and kindneſſes we ſhew them, by the aid and aſſiſtance we give them. We ſhould procure them encouragements, opportunities and means for the enjoyment of a harmleſs and genial pleaſure, according to their inclinations, their circumſtances, their wants and capacities. We ſhould endeavour, by a friendly, open, cheerful air in our carriage and converſation with others, to diſſeminate all around us hilarity and good humour.

Parallel duties, my dear friends, lie on us in regard to the afflicted and unhappy. Would ye in purſuance of the apoſtolical exhortation in our text weep with them that weep, and manifeſt it by words and works, do juſtice to their tears and their ſorrow. Do not abſolutely ſlight and condemn the effuſions of them, though according to your perceptions and in your opinion they ſhould be too vehement. Allow them freely to pour their cares and griefs into your boſom. Require them not all at once to ſuppreſs them, to belie their feelings, or to change them directly for others. Throw no violent obſtruction in the way of that flood of tears which relieves their heart; rather mingle your tears with their's, if ye are of tender, ſympathetic affections, and can weep

weep over your own misfortunes. Have indulgence and compaſſion for them, even though the expreſſion of their grief be really exceſſive and culpable, and pour lenitive, healing balm into their ſtill ſmarting wounds. Endeavour at firſt by letting their ſorrow have free ſcope, and by ſympathiſing with them, to render them capable of conſolation, and then actually proceed to conſole them with the needful precaution, that is, expoſtulate with them, and ſupply them with arguments tending to moderate their afflictions, to render their calamity more tolerable, or to raiſe their depreſſed ſpirits. Repreſent to them the ſubject of their ſolicitude and trouble, in other leſs diſtreſſing points of view, wherein their anxiety had probably prevented them from beholding it before. Remind them of the viciſſitudes of fortune, of the inconſtancy and ſhort duration of evil as well as of good. Strive to infuſe into them courage and hope by moving examples, or by what you yourſelves have experienced. Hold up to them as chriſtians the conſolatory doctrines of religion, the doctrine of the wiſe and tender providence of the Moſt High, of the peculiar nature and deſign of our preſent ſtate, of the moral utility of tribulations, of the connection of our deſtinies in this and in the future world; and ſuffer no doubt, no objection, no fruitleſs attempt to deter you from continuing to hold forth theſe doctrines repeatedly and variouſly, and with the utmoſt tenderneſs of friendſhip, till they feel their ſoothing and conſoling efficacy. In

ſhort, prove the ſincerity of theſe ſentiments, by correſpondent actions. Take up the cauſe of the poor, the wretched, the unfortunate. Yield them all the effectual aid, relief and ſuccour you can poſſibly exert. Remove from them as far as depends on you, the cauſes of their grief and trouble. Readily contribute of your ſubſtance to the reparation of the loſs they have ſuſtained, or to compenſate them for the wrong they have ſuffered. Seek in this manner to convert their ſorrow into joy, their dejection into confidence. To conclude, avoid every thing that may diſquiet, vex, grieve, afflict and trouble others; and make it your moſt delightful employment to wipe away the tears of your unhappy brethren in one way or another as occaſion offers, and to free their hearts from grief and ſorrow.

This, my friends, is to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. Happy we, if we know theſe things, nor only know them, but feel the truth of them at the bottom of our hearts, and always think and act in conformity to that knowledge and thoſe ſenſations! Then ſhall we not only be called men and chriſtians, but ſhall in reality be both, and do honour at once to human nature and to the faith that we profeſs. Then ſhall we be well-pleaſing to our gracious father in heaven, and be genuine diſciples and followers of his ſon Jeſus, uſeful and reſpectable members of ſociety, and hereafter be worthy citizens of heaven, and capable of the ſupreme felicity. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

How much more is neceſſary to Charity than Almsgiving and Bounty.

GOD, the wiſeſt, moſt compaſſionate father, it is thy gracious purpoſe to render us, thy children, progreſſively more perfect and happy, thither tend the ſeveral duties thou impoſeſt on us, all the virtues thou commandeſt us to practiſe. They are the means to that end, the path to that exalted object. The more diligently we fulfil our duties, and exerciſe ourſelves in all the virtues; the more perfect and happy ſhall we be and become. This is thine eternal, inviolable law, the unalterable order of the moral world. Oh then might we never put aſunder, what are ſo intimately, ſo indiſſolubly joined together! Never be ſo fooliſh as to perſuade ourſelves, that the accompliſhment of one duty is our diſcharge from others; or that certain virtues, which we diligently practiſe, can ſupply the place and the defect of the reſt! Oh might we then rather with undivided and unabated zeal ſtrive after whatever

whatever is ſubſtantial, beautiful; whatever is right and fit, whatever is virtuous and honourable; and endeavour truly and in all particulars to be and to afford, what men and chriſtians ought to be and to afford! How greatly ſhould we thus facilitate to ourſelves the path of virtue and chriſtian perfection! How much more pleaſure and ſatisfaction ſhould we enjoy as we journied on it; and how much more ſpeedily and ſurely approach the glorious prize that ſhines before us! God, do thou teach us thyſelf to know and to do thy will, and in the moſt unlimited, voluntary accompliſhment of it to ſeek and to find our happineſs. Bleſs to this end, even the conſiderations we now propoſe to begin, and let us thence learn to perceive the grand ſcope, and the ſtrict union of all the parts of chriſtian virtue, to our inſtruction and improvement. Truſting in thy mercy, and fully relying on the promiſes of thy ſon, our ſaviour, Father of all, we flee to thee, and farther addreſs thee in the words which he vouchſafed to teach us: Our father, &c.

1 COR. xiii. 3.

Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

CHARITY is in our days far more frequently and more highly extolled, and is likewiſe perhaps more generally practiſed than it was in any former period.

period. Of theſe two propoſitions, the former is undeniable; and the latter we ſhall not conteſt, ſince we have no proper ſtandard, by which to compare its activity at different times. This however is certain, that it is more vaunted of than practiſed, more profeſſed in words than ſhewn by deeds; and that many things paſs for charity, and are extolled as ſuch, that either deſerve not at all this comprehenſive title, or only in an inferior ſignification of the word. But too often this virtue is confined to the diſpoſition to give alms and to do acts of bounty, and on many occaſions actually to give, and that bountifully to the poor and needy. Far be it from me to blame the diſpoſition to give and to diſpenſe bounty, or arbitrarily to take upon me to ſet bounds to your donations! What right has he to pretend to humanity, with what right does he call himſelf a chriſtian, who does not readily give and confer befactions, whenever he is able to do ſo? And how can he be an eminently good man, an eminently worthy chriſtian, who is not often obliged to do violence to himſelf, to prevent his giving more, than either duty or prudence would allow? No, follow the impulſe of your heart, when it ſummons you to give and to confer a benefit; let not your donations and acts of bounty be extorted from you by the reiterated petitions and copious tears of the poor and needy; wait not till the extreme diſtreſs of the wretched makes giving and relieving a peculiar law, a rigid, inviolable duty. Give rather, if ye are able,

before

before you are aſked; give readily and with a cheerful heart; give as abundantly as your circumſtances permit, and never be weary in acts of beneficence. All this is beautiful and noble, becoming the man and the chriſtian. But it is only a part, only the leaſt, the eaſieſt part of the duties incumbent on you as men and as chriſtians. They are acts, by which charity in many caſes ſhews itſelf alert; but they do not therefore conſtitute the whole of charity, not the eſſence of it. Elſe what numbers of pious, generous ſouls, themſelves oppreſſed by poverty and indigence, muſt we deny to poſſeſs this godlike virtue? And who ever poſſeſſed and practiſed it in a higher degree than Jeſus, who yet ſo far from being rich, was poor, and could not beſtow on others what he had not himſelf! No, true charity is of a far nobler ſpecies, of a far greater range, than is generally imagined. Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, ſays the apoſtle in our text, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. It is therefore poſſible to be liberal, bountiful even to prodigality, and yet be deſtitute of real charity. And to this, my devout hearers, I would call your attention, as an extremely important branch of chriſtian morality. Let us therefore circumſtantially conſider, how much more is neceſſary to true, chriſtian charity, than merely a diſpoſition to give, and what is generally called being bountiful.

Virtuous, chriſtian charity, as well as every other virtue, preſuppoſes certain diſpoſitions and affections

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in the heart, as its baſis, and by which it muſt be animated and governed in its exertions. And what are theſe diſpoſitions? An univerſal and undiſſembled benevolence towards all mankind; true, unfeigned eſteem for man as ſuch without regard to the ſtation and wealth of the individual; an inward perception and voluntary acknowledgment of our natural affinity and equality, a perception, an acknowledgment, that excludes every notion of pride, of ſelf-exaltation, of contempt for the poor and needy, and induces us to perceive and honour in every man a boſom friend, a brother. They are ſincere compaſſion and cordial ſympathy, real participation in all the concerns and events of their lives; an honeſt complacency in all the beautiful and good that they have and do and enjoy; hearty deſires and wiſhes, that it may go well with them in all reſpects and continually better, and the readineſs thence ariſing to promote their welfare by all means and as much as in our power lies. Theſe ſeveral diſpoſitions and affections are inſeparable from genuine chriſtian charity. They eſſentially belong to it. They conſtitute the very ſoul of it. They are the ſpring and the rule of whatever it does or does not. And theſe diſpoſitions, theſe affections the poor may have as well as the rich, he who has little or nothing to beſtow upon others, equally with him who is able to give much and actually does give much away. If the former afford ſome trifling ſervice to his brother as a brother, from motives of real benevolence,

volence, if he preſent to him, as Jeſus ſays, from true kindneſs and affection a cup of cold water, he gives as indubitable a proof of his charity, as the latter in diſtributing with no leſs tender ſentiments, large donations among the poor and neceſſitous. Thus may the loweſt equally with the higheſt, the pooreſt with the richeſt, the ſervant with his maſter, poſſeſs and practiſe charity. If on the other hand the rich, the noble, the powerful man, with all his generoſity and liberality, is deſtitute of thoſe ſentiments and affections, or neglects to maintain and cheriſh them in his ſoul, he thereby forfeits all pretenſions to genuine chriſtian charity. And may not this be the caſe with many, who boaſt much of their charity, and are extolled by others as extraordinary friends of humanity? They perform ſome beneficent, generous actions, but the benevolent, noble diſpoſition of heart and mind, which ſhould be always prompting them to theſe acts, and be their ruling principle at all times and everywhere, is almoſt entirely unknown to them. Thus numbers ſhew much pity, active pity for the wretched and unhappy, who humbly ſue to them for relief; but behave with no leſs indifference, no leſs pride, no leſs envy and inſolence towards the proſperous, who excel, or eclipſe them, and have no need of their aſſiſtance. Thus numbers give readily and abundantly to the poor and needy; but at the ſame time view them with ſcorn, and frequently accoſt them with unchriſtian harſhneſs and ſeverity. Thus many a one

a one is complaiſant, indulgent, kind to the ſick and diſtreſſed; but obdurate to the frail, vindictive towards his offender, imperious and auſtere to his ſubordinates. Thus many a one perhaps weeps over the misfortunes that happen to others; and yet feels nothing and rejoices not, when affairs go particularly well with his brethren, or they experience ſome remarkable good fortune. And can this be genuine, chriſtian charity? No, thoſe tranſient acts of kindneſs and beneficence, are the effects of a yielding heart, eaſily moved and ſuſceptible of tender and generous emotions, and therefore poſſeſſing the diſpoſitions for genuine charity, but which require cultivation and to be reared into ruling ſentiments, before its pretenſions to that virtue can be allowed.

As however ſolitary good actions without predominant good ſentiments will not conſtitute a man virtuous, ſo neither do good ſentiments unleſs they are exhibited in poſitive acts. The one belong as eſſentially to virtue as the other. As we think, ſo ſhould we alſo act. According to the tenour of our ſentiments, ſo ſhould alſo the tenour of our conduct be. Both the one and the other ſhould ſtrictly and always correſpond together. And thus it muſt be with charity, before it can be admitted into the claſs of virtues, and be honoured as a chriſtian virtue. Thoſe tender, kind, participating emotions of benevolence, of compaſſion, of ſocial ſatisfaction, which we have or pretend to have, muſt expreſs themſelves

themſelves in deeds, in actual courteſies, ſervices, aſſiſtances, in order to ſhew that they are not paltry affectation, or mere tranſient effects of a very irritable nervous ſyſtem, of a heart naturally ſenſible, apt to be ſoftened, in ſhort of mere animal ſympathy. How am I the better, how are others the better, for my ſaying ever ſo often, and in ever ſuch fine and elegant phraſes, and in ever ſo gentle and moving a tone, and believe more or leſs that it proceeds from my heart, that I embrace all mankind, diſtant and near, friends and foes, with inward affection, and that I wiſh them all well and heartily deſire their happineſs, of whatever country and religion they may be, what good will it do, if at the ſame time I remain inert and inactive, employ not my abilities and capacities to the general welfare, and contribute little or nothing, or however much leſs than I could and ſhould to the promotion of the happineſs of my brethren? Of what conſequence is it, that I dilate or pretend to dilate my benevolence ſo far, and aſſign to my charity, or my ſenſibility, a range ſo vaſt, ſo immenſe, if amid this multitude of objects I loſe ſight of myſelf as well as particular perſons, overlook the neareſt as well as the remoteſt, and allow none of the obſcure ſenſations and faint conceptions, that confuſe and overwhelm me, to proceed to action and reality? What advantages it me, what advantages it others, that I ſhed ever ſuch floods of tears over the miſery of the wretched and diſtreſſed, or diſplay ever ſo lively a ſatisfaction at the

the deliverance and proſperity of others, and then am ſour and moroſe, or cold and impatient if any one applies to me for actual ſuccour, effectual comfort, ſubſtantial relief, when I ought really to exert my abilities, and to do ſomewhat conſiſtent with thoſe benevolent ſentiments which I have ſo frequently expreſſed? No, if thy heart, o man, be ſo narrow and thy energy to beneficence ſo ſoon relaxed, confine thy good will as well as thy bounty rather to a few, to thy family and dependents, to thy friends and acquaintance, to thoſe whom thou moſt frequently ſeeſt, moſt intimately knoweſt, and with whom thou art moſt diverſely connected; aſſign to thy charity, that it may the ſooner ripen into action, ſome particular, fixt object, ſome determinate province of operation; do in that circle, contracted as it may be, as much good as ever thou canſt, and then if ſome opportunity and occaſion ſhould offer, even beyond the limits of that circle, in behalf of remoter and leſs known brethren, to do and to promote good, thou wilt aſſuredly be in want neither of motive nor ability for it.

To charity ſomewhat more belongs for rendering it worthy of being entitled a virtue. Uniformity of ſentiments and actions. Virtue is not a tranſient or changeable quality, much leſs at enmity with itſelf. It is a ſteady, determinate and conſiſtent principle uniformly actuating the ſoul. Such alſo is charity. He who is diſpoſed one day thus towards mankind, his brethren, and otherwiſe the next; behaves to

them at one time in this manner and differently at another; to-day is kind, liberal, amicable, and to-morrow harſh, ſullen, inexorable to them; or he that reſpects and loves the one, but envies and hates the other, does all for one, and for the other nothing, is fair and equitable towards one and unjuſt towards the other, and is led and determined in his ſentiments and actions more by adventitious circumſtances, by outward objects, by his humour or by vanity than by truth: how can he have any reaſonable claim to the virtue of charity? And how many pretenſions of this nature muſt fall to the ground when tried by this rule! Could we attend many a one, who has the reputation of being exceedingly charitable, becauſe on numerous occaſions he is beneficent and liberal, could we accompany him home and ſee him in domeſtic life, in his diurnal occupations, and be the unobſerved ſpectator of his behaviour towards his family, towards his children, his ſervants, his dependents, his workmen, his ordinary companions, how few marks of real humanity, of truly kind, gentle, tender ſentiments and affections ſhould we there diſcover! How ſoon would thoſe ſtriking acts of liberality loſe all their value in our eyes, as the mere effects of chance or vanity! No, genuine, chriſtian charity is always conſiſtent and uniform. It is confined to no place, to no time, excluſively attached to no circumſtances and perſons. It appears and acts in domeſtic, as in ſocial and public life, where nobody ſees, as where

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all eyes are turned upon us; where it falls hard upon us, as well as where it puts us to no difficulty; where we get only ungrateful returns and illwill by it, as where we are recompenſed for it. Becauſe this alone ſhews that we are really animated by charity, that it reigns within us, and is an ever active principle of our conduct.

Laſtly charity, in order to merit the name of a virtue, not unfrequently requires ſacrifices, ſelf-denial, laborious exertions. And likewiſe thence is ſeen, how much more pertains to it than giving and bounty. Nothing is eaſier than to give away what we do not want, or what we can part with without greatly ſuffering in any reſpect by it. It is often much eaſier thus to give, than not to give, ſince in the former caſe either we only follow our own inclination, or at once free ourſelves from the ſight of diſagreeable objects and the painful impreſſion which complaints and lamentations make upon us, and ſince in the latter caſe we frequently in rejecting the petition of the ſuppliant are obliged to do more violence to ourſelves, muſt have longer ſtruggles within, and ſometimes muſt ſhew more real fortitude of mind, greater command over ourſelves and over external objects. But here too is ſeen the diſtinctive character and the no leſs juſt than generous temper of the man, of the chriſtian, who is animated by real charity. He conſiders not ſo much what is eaſy or difficult, agreeable or diſagreeable, as what is right and fit, and in every caſe the beſt. He gives, when

giving is the moſt ſerviceable and fit of whatever he can do. He refrains however likewiſe from giving, however painful it may be to his heart, when it would be pernicious to the petitioner, or when he can be relieved better and more ſubſtantially in ſome other way. He proportions and determines the ſervice he can render to his brethren, and the benefits he grants them, not ſo much by the trouble they may occaſion him, as by the utility they may procure them. The true friend of humanity therefore, not only readily gives to others, if he have wherewithal to give, but he likewiſe as readily exerts himſelf in behalf of others, readily labours for others, readily communicates to them his perceptions and abilities, readily ſacrifices to them ſeveral pleaſures, accommodations and advantages, readily affords them perſonal ſervice, and reckons nothing for loſt, that is of uſe to his brethren. And if he thus in all reſpects provides and lives for others, and always endeavours to make the beſt, the moſt public-ſpirited uſe of his capacities and abilities and poſſeſſions, how much more equitable is his claim to charity, than if he ſolely or principally confine himſelf to the diſtribution of his property with ever ſo liberal a hand among the poor and needy! No, though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Learn hence, my pious hearers, how much true, chriſtian charity compriſes, how many virtues are requiſite thereto, and how cloſely, how intimately all the

the virtues are linked together. No one can ſubſiſt without the others. Here no arbitrary ſelection can be admitted. Unleſs we are determined to be and to become virtuous entirely and in all reſpects, we cannot be and become ſo at all. Either we muſt follow all the precepts of religion and chriſtianity, without exception, or we cannot obſerve any of them. Virtue is a complete whole, incapable of diviſion, a principle of action, by which we muſt be conſtantly animated and governed, and which muſt ſhew itſelf in all our actions. Our obedience to God muſt be unlimited, or it is not obedience, at leaſt not filial, generous obedience. And only then, my dear friends, only then will it be eaſy and pleaſant to us to diſcharge our duty, and always to do that which is right and proper when we devote ourſelves entirely to God and virtue, and retain no corrupt affection, no inordinate paſſion, no ſin, no failing, combat and eſchew them all, never ſeek to evade any duty, and never deſire to be abſolved from any exertion and exerciſe of virtue. Truth, order, ſteadineſs, agreement between our ſentiments and actions, words and deeds, between all the parts of our inward and outward deportment, conſtitute the faireſt lineament of the human character and the worthieſt object of its exertions. Such was the character of Jeſus, the captain of our ſalvation, our precurſor and guide. What his heart felt, that his mouth ſpake, that his hand did, that his whole life proclaimed. Well-wiſhing and well-doing were in-

ſeparable with him. No good diſpoſition with him lay barren and dead, and no good action was deſtitute of good and generous diſpoſitions. His charity as well as his virtue in general, was deed and truth. The ſame invariable benevolence towards his brethren, and the ſame active, efficacious avidity to promote their happineſs, animated him whenever he ſpoke and whenever he was ſilent, when he bore and when he ſuffered, when he taught and when he acted, when he granted the ſuppliant his requeſt and when he refuſed it. And ſuch, my dear friends, ſuch ſhould likewiſe our virtue, ſuch our charity be. Mouth and heart, thoughts and words, inclination and action ſhould conſtantly be in perfect harmony, and always, as far as our abilities reach, be inſeparably linked together. Thus ſhall we juſtly bear the title of diſciples and followers of Jeſus, the title of the children of God, our gracious and beneficent father in heaven, and render ourſelves capable of greater exertions of charity and of a purer enjoyment of them in the future world. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

In what a variety of ways we may ſerve and benefit others.

GOD, moſt benign, moſt bountiful being, from whom inceſſant ſtreams of life, of joy, of happineſs flow down on all the parts of thy immenſe domain and are diffuſed over us, thy creatures and children, to do good is thy delight; to do good ſhould likewiſe be ours and really is! Thou haſt ever united with it the moſt ſenſible and varied pleaſure, haſt tuned our hearts to ſympathy and compaſſion, and endowed us with innumerable talents and means, ſupplied us with innumerable opportunities and motives, for yielding to theſe emotions of our hearts and for enjoying the pleaſure that infallibly ſprings from them. All thy children, merciful father, may and ſhould do good to their brethren and ſiſters, and all ſhould be happy in that divine employment. God, what are all thy inſtitutions, all thy laws but love, but calls and directions to felicity! What are our mutual dependence, our mutual wants and the connections in which we are placed together, but means and motives to ſerve one

another, and thus to promote our common welfare and to augment the ſum of our ſocial pleaſure? Oh who would not liſten to thy call! Who would not willingly follow thy direction to be happy by making others ſo! Who would not cheerfully do as much good as he ever can, in order to enjoy as much pleaſure as ever he is capable of enjoying! Oh open thou thyſelf our hearts continually more to theſe ſentiments and emotions, the nobleſt, the moſt bliſsful emotions and ſentiments by which we can be inſpired; and let them to-day and every day of our lives be truly fruitful in good works. Continually to be acquiring a greater likeneſs, to be drawing ever nearer to thee, our father, our tender and beneficent father, by benevolence and beneficence towards our brethren, and thereby to be rendering ourſelves progreſſively more ſuſceptible of thy complacency and worthier of the appellation of thy children: be that our moſt ſtrenuous endeavour, our glory and our joy! Bleſs in this view the conſiderations we are now about to begin. Let us all be taught and quickened by them to employ the gifts and endowments which thou haſt granted us, according to thy will and to the general welfare. Theſe our ſupplications we offer up to thy divine majeſty in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and in entire reliance on his promiſes, thus farther addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

1 PETER iv. 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.

DOING good to others, rejoices every human heart that is not totally callous and corrupt. Doing good to others engages the approbation and applauſe of every man, is honourable in the ſight of all. Our propenſity to pleaſure, to an agreeable mode of exiſtence, and our appetite for approbation and honour may therefore, even without regard to the ſuperior motives of virtue and religion, very powerfully impell us to beneficence. The generality of mankind too more or leſs feel the force of this impulſe. But every one is not in ſuch affluent circumſtances as to allow him to indulge his propenſity to beneficence by liberally diſtributing preſents and alms among his indigent brethren. This is the privilege of the rich or the opulent. The want of theſe means is ſometimes afflictive to thoſe, who are not wealthy and yet would fain be bountiful; they are even apt to envy ſuch as live in opulence, and to deem themſelves unhappy on account of their ſtraightened circumſtances. But, generous as the principle of theſe judgments and feelings may be, they are however not perfectly equitable,

equitable, and may very eaſily lead us into miſtakes: wealth and affluence are unqueſtionably deſirable, but not the only, not the principal means of benefiting others. No, God has put the practice of this amiable virtue, and the enjoyment of the pure pleaſure annexed to it in the power of us all. Every one, the poor as well as the rich, the low as the high, the ſervant as his maſter, may be the benefactor of his brother, and each may be ſo in various methods. As man does not live by bread alone, but to his happineſs has need of many other things, ſo likewiſe we may do him good not only by beſtowing on him the bread he wants, but by a thouſand other kinds of bounty and relief. Every one, as the apoſtle tells us in our text, has received certain gifts, whereby he is enabled to ſerve others, whereby as a good ſteward of the deity he can promote the welfare of his whole family on earth. To illuſtrate this matter ſomewhat more circumſtantially, and thereby to call the attention of benevolent hearts to the various opportunities of really doing good, is the purport of my preſent diſcourſe. I ſhall merely point out, in what various ways we may benefit others, ſerve and be uſeful to them.

The diverſity of ſituations that ſubſiſts among mankind, and the place that each individual occupies in the greater and ſmaller ſocieties to which he belongs; the diverſity of the wants and of the ſufferings of mankind; the diverſity of the gifts and endowments, which God has diſtributed among them; and

and the diverſity of the methods, in which they may be applied to the general welfare, are four particulars pregnant with information, how every one is able and ought to ſerve others by the gift that he has received of God.

How great is, firſt, the diverſity of ſituations among mankind, and how various therefore the opportunity and the inducement to ſerve and be uſeful to one another in different ways! How many claſſes and deſcriptions of perſons fill up the interval between the monarch, or the prince and the meaneſt of his ſubjects! And how various their deſtination; how various the ſphere of action aſſigned them; how manifold the good and uſeful, that each may contrive, adopt, project, promote and do therein! Each has his particular ſtation in domeſtic and civil ſociety; each his particular proximate or remote connections with the ſeveral members of it; each his allotted buſineſſes and labours, which he may perform this way or that, better or worſe. Each can contribute his ſhare, each can contribute a great deal to the preſervation, to the ſecurity, to the regularity, to the welfare of the whole; each can contribute his portion, each very much to the conveniency, to the pleaſure, to the happineſs, both of domeſtic and ſocial life. Each is in a certain ſenſe indiſpenſable, and each promotes by the good that he does in his ſtation and calling, at the ſame time the good that others do in their ſtation and their calling, and which they could not do if any ſtoppage aroſe in the

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rotation of reciprocal ſervices and aſſiſtances. — — Of what conſequence might the father and the mother of a family be to their children, their ſervants, their inferiors! What ſources of happineſs might they open to them and through them to poſterity! And how great the conſequence in return might children, and dependents, and ſervants, be of to their parents and ſuperiors! How great a relief might they be to them in their weightier affairs, and thus increaſe their beneficial influence on the public welfare! Of how great conſequence might the younger branches of a family be to one another! From what a number of errors and inadvertences might they guard each other; to what attainments in wiſdom and virtue might they encourage and lead each other, and what an influence thus have upon their acquaintance and friends, and on future generations! What might not the married pair be to one another, and what might they not effectuate by mutual eſteem and affection and aid, by united efforts, in the larger or ſmaller ſphere in which they act! And what may not every member of ſociety, without quitting his poſt, without intermeddling in other mens affairs, without going out of his natural province, contribute to the benefit of the whole community! Where is the man, who might not promote it in virtue of his ſtation by a thouſand methods? If the government is watchful over the public tranquillity and ſafety; if the magiſtrate maintains the laws in their due reſpect, and protects the individual in his property;

perty; if one preceptor teaches the child the elements of human knowledge, another inſtructs the youth in the higher branches of ſcience, a third communicates to perſons of every age and ſtation the knowledge of the deity and of religion; if the ſtateſman is attentive to the ſeveral exigences of the country and provides for its great concerns; if the prince ſurveys it all, keeps it all together and is the vital principle of the whole: the countryman produces a plentiful ſupply of food from the furrows of his plough and the fields he induſtriouſly cultivates; the manufacturer and the mechanic work up and improve the products of the country; the tradeſman brings them into circulation, and the merchant barters the ſurplus againſt thoſe of other nations; thus thouſands of hands are ſet in motion, to convey them to the ſeveral places where they are wanted, and to faſhion them in all manner of ways that may render them more ſerviceable and uſeful; ſo thouſands of eyes are vigilant for their preſervation, for their lawful diſtribution, for their ſecure and peaceful enjoyment; and while all this is going forward for the general benefit; the workman is employed in numberleſs mean and laborious occupations, which none of thoſe could perform without neglecting their own, and which are equally neceſſary, equally indiſpenſable with theirs! And how much good now may every one do, if he does what belongs to him with willingneſs, with fidelity, with a heart benevolently affected towards his brethren, participating

ing in their happineſs and cheerfully concurring to promote it? What ſituation, what place can a man fill, in which he may not daily ſerve and be uſeful to hundreds of others?

Conſider again, my devout hearers, how different the wants of mankind and how various their ſufferings, and thence judge, in what a variety of ways one may ſerve and aſſiſt and be uſeful to another. If every one found within himſelf all that is neceſſary to his happineſs, he could eaſily diſpenſe with the aſſiſtance and bounty of the reſt; and if all had the ſame wants and languiſhed under the ſame afflictions, each individual would have enough to do to provide for himſelf, ſo that no one could either ſupply the neceſſities of another or alleviate his ſufferings. But how diverſe and manifold are the wants and woes of the human race! How different the proportion and degree in which they preſs on the individual! And how various therefore the means and opportunities of ſerving and aſſiſting each other! Here are wants of the body; food, raiment, lodging, health, ſtrength: there wants of the mind; information, knowledge, wiſdom, virtue, inward peace, pleaſure, hope, content. Here is the want of neceſſaries: there the want of the commodious, the elegant, the agreeable. Here are corporeal ſufferings; weakneſs, debility, mutilation, decrepitude, pain, ſickneſs, lingering death. There are ſufferings of the ſoul; vexation, trouble, anxiety, grief, dejection, doubt, remorſe,

pangs

pangs of conſcience, melancholy, deſpondency, pe-
l of deſpair. Here is the want of advice, there of ſupport: here of courage, there of prudence: here of means and implements of trade, there of abilities for it: here of underſtanding, there of alacrity and application: here of intending, there of performing good: here of moderation, there of patience: here of modeſty and diffidence, there of ſelf-importance and confidence. Here is a poor creature, who has no bread, but is able to work: there a rich man, abounding in luxuries, but is not enured to hard, continued labour. Here an infirm, a ſick perſon, who is in need of attendance and nurſing: there a healthy and robuſt one, who requires neither any particular attendance nor nurſing, but more and better diet and apparel. Here an ignorant, but inquiſitive being, deſirous of inſtruction: there a man of letters, who is deſtitute of a maintenance for himſelf and his family. Here a child of fortune, who has vaſt poſſeſſions, but knows not the proper uſe of wealth: there an unfortunate wretch, who is in utter deſtitution, but is capable of directing the former in the uſe and application of his property. Here a diſconſolate mourner, in ſearch of a friend to dry up his tears and raiſe his drooping head: there a gay and ſprightly character who would be glad to impart his ſatisfactions to another. Here an alert and induſtrious individual, who wants the needful knowledge and dexterity. There one who underſtands the buſineſs or the art, but has not ſufficient

ficient diligence and induſtry. And thus, my pious audience, the matter ſtands in numberleſs other caſes. The neceſſities of the one are not the neceſſities of the other: the ſufferings of the one are not the ſufferings of the other. What is wanting to the former is poſſeſſed by the latter: that whereof the former poſſeſſes but little, the latter has in abundance: what this man ſuffers, that other ſuffers not: ſeldom have ſeveral perſons the ſame wants in an equal degree: rarely do ſeveral ſuffer under the ſame afflictions in the ſame manner. Every one may therefore in various methods give and receive, adminiſter relief and accept relief, comfort and be comforted, ſerve and ſubmit to be ſerved, communicate benefit and ſatisfaction and enjoy benefit and ſatisfaction. Every one therefore needs only to beſtow what he has; to do what he can; to afford what he is able: thus will each individual alleviate now theſe, now thoſe afflictions and troubles to others, each relieve now theſe, now thoſe neceſſities of his brother. And how great an aggregate of obligations, of kind offices, of benefactions would ariſe from this mutual interchange of affluence and ſcarcity! In the preſent combination of things there is no imaginable want which no one could relieve, not an affliction for which no mitigation and comfort could be procured.

Conſider thirdly, my pious hearers, how numerous and various the capacities and powers, the gifts and acquirements of mankind are, and thence judge how great the variety of ways in which they may

may ſerve and aſſiſt and benefit each other. No one is exactly that which another is; no one has preciſely that which another has; no one knows all that another knows; no one can and may do whatever another can and may. Every one has his own, thus or otherwiſe limited, and definite capacities and powers; every one has his peculiar horizon; every one his particular manner of viewing, of diſcriminating, of treating, of employing objects; every one his proper degree of ſagacity, of experience, of ingenuity, of dexterity, of activity. Every one has therefore the capacity to occupy certain ſtations in ſociety with uſefulneſs, to fill up certain chaſms in it, to bear certain burdens of it for others, to promote certain advantages or accommodations of it for ſome or for all, and thereby to co-operate to both the general and particular welfare of its members. And in fact how greatly diverſified are the gifts, which the deity has diſtributed amongſt mankind, how different the meaſure in which he has beſtowed them, and how various the uſes to which we may put them! How various therefore, alſo the methods of ſerving and benefiting others! — One has underſtanding; and how various the ſpecies of it are! Here is a profound, collected, there a comprehenſive and excurſive; here a quick, but volatile, there a ſlow but ſolid underſtanding. — Another has authority and ſtrength, and how various are theſe in their kinds! Here is ſtrength of mind, there ſtrength of body; here the power of beauty,

there the power of eloquence; here the command of oneſelf and the paſſions, there the authority of the ruler and the commander over his ſubjects; here impetuous, overwhelming, there mild, inſinuating, yet more irreſiſtible force. — A third poſſeſſes honour and reſpect; and how various the diſtinctions of mankind and the uſe of them to the public good! Here is the ſplendour of birth and ſtation; there the purer luſtre of perſonal merits: here is the charm of jocund youth; there the dignity of ſapient age: here the lucid beam of intellect, there gentle, genial warmth of heart; here ſuperior wiſdom, there exemplary virtue attracts the eyes and hearts of all, and expands them to its illuminating and animating influence. Here are extraordinary minds, born for empire and command, there patterns of induſtry, of fidelity, of docility. — Another poſſeſſes wealth and affluence, which he may diſpenſe to his brethren; and how various alſo are theſe! As various as the works of nature and of art, as the fruits of human genius and induſtry. — Another again poſſeſſes extraordinary ſenſibility; a heart that takes an intereſt in every thing, a ſoul with open avenues to every joy, every ſorrow, every concern of his fellow creatures, which embraces with ſincere affection all that but touches on its ever widening ſphere, connecting and beatifying all of them with itſelf, and together in numberleſs ways. And who is able to recount the infinite variations of human capacities and powers and endowments and their analogies to each other?

One

One has ingenuity, an extenſive, ſtrong turn for invention; the other has judgment and dexterity in execution. One quickneſs and pliancy to the buſineſs of the preſent moment; the other perſevering, indefatigable patience for intricate and tireſome undertakings. One courage on the approach of danger; the other prudence to avoid, or fortitude to encounter it. One an ardency to animate, to tranſpierce, to conſume all around it; the other cool conſideration, and reſolution to put a ſtop to this devouring flame. One an open, manly boldneſs in bearing witneſs to the truth and in defence of virtue; the other a prudent reſerve, a diſcreet ſecrecy for defeating the aims of ſubtlety, and for guarding the weak. — And now, my pious hearers, let each exchange his capacities and endowments and abilities and poſſeſſions againſt thoſe of the other; now let each do that which he can do better and eaſier and ſurer than the other can; now let the ſtrong combine with the weak, the rich with the poor, the intrepid with the cautious, the powerful with the expert, the man of ſcience with the artiſt and mechanic; now let every one apply the particular talent entruſted to him, as often as he has the proper motive and opportunity for it: what a bleſſing would the prodigiouſly various commutation of kind offices, of aſſiſtance and ſupport, of benevolence and beneficence, be to all in general and to each in particular! How plainly would it appear, that none, even the weakeſt and meaneſt are deficient in means

and abilities for being uſeful to others in numerous ways!

Conſider laſtly, my pious hearers, how manifold and different the methods in which ye may ſerve your brethren, in which ye may do them all the good that ye are able. Thinking and ſpeaking; keeping ſilence and hearing; giving and lending; partaking and borrowing; bearing and ſuffering and relieving; doing and not doing: are ſo many different methods of ſerving and being uſeful to others, and each the beſt in its proper ſeaſon, the moſt productive of beneficial conſequences. At preſent ye are ſerving your neighbour, by thinking with him or for him, upon truth, upon happineſs, upon human affairs in general and his in particular, and thus helping him to find or levelling for him the road to knowledge, to certainty, to prudent conduct; at another time ye ſerve him by talking, in communicating to him the reſults of your reflections and inquiries; entertaining, improving, cheering him by lively, inſtructive, friendly converſation; in comforting the afflicted, rouzing the ſlothful and indolent, encouraging the faint-hearted, correcting the erroneous, vindicating innocence and truth, unmaſking iniquity, detecting falſehood, exciting and nouriſhing a ſenſe of the beautiful and the good in others. Ye now ſerve your neighbour by keeping ſilence, in retaining his ſecrets ſafe locked up within your breaſt, in not publiſhing his weakneſſes and failings, in not divulging his honeſt views and projects; in checking your-

ſelf

ſelf from ſhewing your diſpleaſure during the momentary heat of his paſſion, in not provoking him by unſeaſonable or vehemeut expoſtulations to freſh ſallies of rage, and thus tempting him to increaſe his guilt: then ye ſerve him by hearing, in liſtening attentively, one while with approbation, with complacency, at another with patience and candour to his ſentiments, his opinions, his doubts, his objections, his interrogations, in allowing him to pour his complaints and grievances freely and unmoleſtedly into your boſom, or in giving him ſcope and opportunity, to ſhew his underſtanding, his wit, his knowledge and diſcernment on their moſt advantageous ſides, and of playing his part in company to his own ſatisfaction. Now ye ſerve your neighbours by giving, in feeding the hungry, in giving drink to the thirſty, in cloathing the naked, in adviſing the perplexed, in imparting joy to the ſorrowful, in affording protection to the forlorn and perſecuted, in being a father to the fatherleſs: then ye ſerve him by lending, to one your ſuperfluous wealth, to another your abilities, to a third your conſequence, to a fourth your ſkill and ingenuity. Now ye ſerve your neighbour by taking an intereſt in his affairs, and whatever he does, in weeping with them that weep, rejoicing with the joyful, ſincerely delighting in the proſperity of the proſperous; acknowledging the worth of every accompliſhment that is conſpicuous in your brother, and of every good act that he performs, eſteeming that to be great and

important which is of magnitude and importance to him; and taking a concern in whatever concerns him: then ye ſerve him by receiving from him, as in kindly accepting of his eſteem, his commendation, his praiſe, his affection, his bounty, his advice, his aſſiſtance, and thus gratifying him by the ſenſibility you diſcover to the ſatisfaction which he feels from having obliged you and done you good. Now ye ſerve your neighbour by bearing and ſuffering, as, when you cannot correct him of his weakneſſes and failings, or get the better of his ill humour, in keeping your temper and refraining from cutting reproaches, in willingly bearing burdens which otherwiſe he muſt bear, in ſacrificing your eaſe to his eaſe, your pleaſure to his pleaſure, your liberty to his liberty, in forgiving him his offences and not recompencing evil with evil, not requiting injuries by injuries: then ye ſerve him by actual aſſiſtance and relief, in removing ſtumbling blocks out of his way, aſſiſting him in his work, reſcuing him from ſome danger, delivering him from trouble, relieving him in his neceſſities, ſupplying his deficiency or repairing his loſs, promoting his plans and eaſing him in the diſcharge of his duty. Now in ſhort ye ſerve your neighbour by acting, contriving, undertaking, executing what pleaſes him, what is uſeful and agreeable to him, what procures him honour and ſatisfaction, in acting and operating in his behalf and in his own way: then ye ſerve him by not acting, as in not thwarting him in his progreſs, not diſturbing him

him in his occupations and enterpriſes, not defeating his ſatisfactions, not interrupting his amuſements, not moleſting him in his application, and in abſtaining from whatever may annoy or confuſe him, what may cauſe him detriment or uneaſineſs in the proſecution of ſome deſign. — How diverſified, my dear friends, how incalculably diverſified are therefore the methods whereby each of us may mutually ſerve the other, every day, every hour of our lives, in every ſituation, in every relative poſition, and adminiſter the gift as every man has received it one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God, to the benefit of his whole family!

And now, my chriſtian auditors, let none any longer complain, the poor no more than the rich, the man of low degree no more than him of high birth and ſtation, the weak no more than the ſtrong, that he is deficient in means and opportunities of doing good to others and of making himſelf uſeful to the public! Let every one only do the good, which agreeably to his ſtation, to his abilities, in his ſituation, in his connections he can and ought to do, and do it in ſincerity of heart, ſo will every one fulfill his duty, every one enjoy the pleaſure ariſing from beneficence in various ways, in numberleſs inſtances be the benefactor of his brethren, and ſo will human miſery infallibly be greatly diminiſhed and human happineſs more and more promoted.

Oh well, everlaſtingly well for him, who ſhall collect to himſelf againſt that great day of judgment

and retribution, ſuch evidences of his chriſtian temper and conduct, and then can receive in the ſight of heaven, and in the preſence of the aſſembled world, the approbation of his lord and the fruits of his good works!

SERMON XXV.

The Duty of loving our Enemies.

GOD, thou art eſſential love. With parental tenderneſs thou embraceſt the whole of thy immenſe creation, and all thy creatures that are ſuſceptible of happineſs, are proſpered and bleſſed by thy bounty. Even the wicked thou pitieſt, as a father pities his ſon, even to the ungrateful and diſobedient, the rebellious to thy government, thou ſheweſt infinite mercy. Daily doſt thou cauſe thy ſun to ſhine upon the wicked as upon the good, and ſendeſt rain and fertility on the field of both the juſt and the unjuſt. Us alſo haſt thou formed capable of affection, of generous, noble ſentiments and actions. As thy dear children it behoves us to be followers of thee, and like thee with cordial benevolence to embrace all mankind as our brethren, and to do them all as much good as we are able. Like thee, our father in heaven, it behoves us to be kind, merciful, placable, to have patience and indulgence one towards another, and to forgive one another his treſpaſſes, as we deſire that thou wouldſt forgive us. Far be it from us to complain of theſe

thy

thy precepts, or to doubt of their juſtice and equity. No, we acknowledge, we are ſenſible that they are an honour to man, that they elevate and ennoble his nature, that they open to him exuberant ſources of perfection and happineſs, and that the obſervance of them brings him nearer to thee, his creator and father, and renders him more capable of communion with thee. Did we but always inwardly perceive and feel, how holy and reverend is thy will, how good and righteous are all thy commands! Did we but even then not doubt of it when it behoves us actually to do thy will, and to execute thy commands! Here, while occupied in thy worſhip and in ſerious meditation on our duties, may we collect ſtrength and vigour for the performance of them. Sanctify then to this end, what we ſhall even now conceive and hear. Grant that it may preſent the truth in full luſtre to our minds, and ſink ſo deeply into our hearts, that we may willingly and conſtantly follow its dictates. We implore it of thee in the name of our lord and ſaviour, and with the boldneſs that becomes thy children thus farther addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

MATTH. V. 44.

Love your enemies.

THE love of our enemies recommended to us by Jeſus in our text, is a precept truly chriſtian; a precept which, as inculcated upon us by Chriſt and his

his apoſtles, is entirely peculiar to chriſtianity, and clearly atteſts the ſuperior wiſdom and virtue of its founder. Weak minds, vulgar ſouls riſe not to that degree of moral perfection, which the chriſtian love of enemies implies, and to which it leads. Only an underſtanding neither blinded by prejudice nor warped by paſſion, which takes every object for what it is, and in all its judgments is guided by the ſtricteſt veracity; only a heart, that, faſt ſhut againſt the ſuggeſtions of vanity and ſelf-love, is ſenſible to all that is beautiful and good, wherever it can diſcover and behold it; only a perſon who perceives and eſteems his dignity and the dignity of mankind in general, and makes his principal diſtinction, his whole glory to conſiſt in approximating himſelf to the deity, and gaining a conſtantly nearer reſemblance to that grand original of all beauty and perfection, by benevolent, generous, magnanimous ſentiments and actions: ſuch an one alone can elevate himſelf to the virtue of loving his enemy, and practiſe it in all its extent. No wonder, if this virtue, even among chriſtians, is extremely far from common, if by ſome it ſhould be deemed impracticable, and beyond the power of human nature to attain, and by others exceedingly difficult, or not abſolutely neceſſary. No wonder, that the precept in our text ſhould even be made a reproach to chriſtianity, and its morality on that very account, affirmed to be enthuſiaſtical and exorbitant. Many difficulties however

ever in regulating our judgments as well as our conduct by this chriſtian precept, would fall to the ground, were we on one hand to form more definite and correct notions of the matter itſelf, and on the other, frequently to recollect the numerous and powerful arguments that render it proper to be recommended as highly important to the man of reflection, and which will really ſtand the moſt rigorous ſcrutiny of reaſon. And it is this object, my pious hearers, that I am deſirous by my preſent diſcourſe to promote. To define wherein the love of enemies conſiſts, or does not conſiſt; and then to examine the leading principles which incite and oblige us to this practice, ſhall now be the ſubject of our chriſtian meditations.

By enemies, we underſtand not ſimply open and declared adverſaries, but in general all thoſe who are in any reſpect and from whatever motive, ill-diſpoſed towards us, and diſcover theſe diſpoſitions by words or deeds; all who wiſh us ill and do us harm; all who are grieved at our proſperity, or exult in our misfortunes, and who intentionally diminiſh and ſubvert the former, and gladly aggravate the latter; whether their diſpoſition and behaviour towards us be the tranſient effects of unbridled paſſion, or the more permanent conſequence of a decided averſion towards us, or actual hatred againſt us. Our lord points out the enemies whom we are to love, as thoſe who curſe us, who hate us, who deſpitefully uſe us and

and perſecute us. And now wherein conſiſts the love that we owe ſuch perſons, or whereof we are capable towards ſuch perſons?

Nothing that is contrary to truth, or to the nature of things and of man; nothing that is abſolutely impoſſible to us; nothing that militates with the general welfare, can ever be the precept of God, can ever be a duty or a virtue. This is the ſafe rule that we ſhould here adopt, and by which we ſhould adjuſt our notions concerning the love of enemies.

The love of enemies, conſiſts not therefore in approving their bad qualities, their iniquitous, criminal plots, deſigns, acts as right and proper, or holding them to be leſs wicked and culpable than they really are. No, to the friend of truth and virtue, as well as in the ſight of God, every object is preciſely what it is, wickedneſs is and is called by him wicked, iniquity is to him always iniquity, be it done by whom it may. As a friend cannot preſume to diſannul our judgment concerning the natural quality and the moral worth of things, ſo neither can the enemy or the adverſary take upon him to do ſo. In the former caſe, we ſhould be miſguided by partial affection, in the latter, by miſtaken magnanimity. Only we muſt take care not to confound meaſures with perſons, actions with agents, and while we blame and reject the former, not always to cenſure and condemn the latter.

Neither does it belong to the love of enemies, that we ſhould not be ſenſible to the injuries we ſuſtain from

from them, not think ourſelves aggrieved and offended by them, and be indifferent to their injurious ſentiments and diſpoſitions towards us. As long as man ſhall continue to love himſelf, and prefer pleaſure to pain, happineſs to miſery, as long therefore as man ſhall continue to be man, every injury committed againſt him muſt offend him, and every refuſal of that benevolence and eſteem, which he feels to be his due, muſt mortify him. But, though he neither can nor ſhould be inſenſible to it, he may however and ought to moderate his ſenſibility ſo as not to let it plunge him in ſorrow, or exaſperate him againſt his offender.

Not leſs abſurd and incompatible with the nature of things, would it thirdly be, to require of a man that he ſhould have the ſame complacency in his enemy as in his friend, that he ſhould think with the ſame pleaſure and ſatisfaction on the former as on the latter, and be as fond of converſing with the one as with the other. No, only the beautiful and good has any right to pleaſe us; only the intercourſe with beings that wiſh us well can gladden and refreſh us; we can be entirely at eaſe only where ſafety, liberty, frankneſs and confidence reign. But frequently and cheerfully to relinquiſh pleaſure for duty; to ſhun no man with whom we ought to correſpond by the laws of humanity, of ſociety and religion; and then to divert our attention from his bad, his offenſive or injurious qualities, and turn it on his oppoſite merits and excellencies, is a demand of virtue;

and

and to comply with this demand is by no means impoſſible.

The love of enemies does not fourthly imply, that we ſhould never upbraid him who has injured us with the injury, never remind him of it, never attempt to convince him of our innocence and his guilt, and never try to move him to repent and to repair his fault. No, that is a duty which we owe both to him and to ourſelves, as it may promote his moral perfection and his tranquillity of mind as well as our own. But the virtue we are ſpeaking of requires, that we do it without aſperity, without violence; that our rebuke be not ill-timed, not publicly diſgraceful to him, not inſultingly and with an air of triumph over him; that we rather expoſtulate with him in a calm and ſedate temper; that we do ſo in the ſpirit of meekneſs, in the ſentiment that we alſo are liable to miſtakes and failings; that we ſhew a readineſs to hear and to accept as valid whatever he has to offer in his excuſe; and that we grudge no pains that we take in this reſpect and in theſe ſentiments, nor repent of them though they ſhould prove of no avail, or even humiliating to us.

To conclude, the love of enemies forbids us not to adopt the proper meaſures for ſecurity againſt freſh and perhaps ſtill more ſenſible injuries, for preventing greater miſchief, and for depriving our enemy of the means and opportunities of hurting us. Self-preſervation and defence is a natural inſtinct, and cannot be criminal, if regulated in its effects by the

the light of reaſon. But it becomes highly criminal, if we employ unlawful, baſe means to that end; or if we employ the legitimate means in an illegitimate manner, if we conſult revenge rather than ſafety, and ſeek rather to injure our enemy, than to protect ourſelves.

Having made theſe obſervations on what cannot enter into the idea of loving our enemies, and what neither reaſon nor religion demand of us in this reſpect, it will be eaſier for us to aſcertain wherein this precept properly conſiſts, and with what ſentiments and actions it ſhould be attended.

In the firſt place it requires, that we give our enemy credit for whatever good, excellent, honourable qualities and acts he may in other reſpects have and perform, ſincerely rejoice in them, ſeek neither to deny nor to extenuate and to obſcure them, but without reluctance honour them with our approbation, and publiſh them with pleaſure to others. And why ſhould I not be able to do this? Does then anything good, anything excellent, anything honourable, ceaſe to be that which it is, becauſe my adverſary, my enemy poſſeſſes and does it? Does not the texture and the beauty of the moſt poiſonous plant, does not the ſtructure and the force of the moſt ravenous beaſt deſerve my admiration and eſteem? And is not every, even the moſt depraved human being, far ſuperior to the plants and beaſts of the field? Are not the lineaments of the image of his creator more or leſs conſpicuous in every man?

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Cannot the ſame object, the ſame perſon, in different analogies and views be good and bad, uſeful and noxious, reſpectable and contemptible? And is it not a characteriſtic of the wiſe man, not to conſider and to judge partially of anything? Is it not a characteriſtic of the chriſtian, to revere every trace of the deity in his works?

To the love of enemies, and of all offenders in general, it is in the ſecond place neceſſary, that we view and contemplate their failings and offences, the injuries and affronts that we have ſuffered from them, always rather, and as long as poſſible, on that ſide which exhibits them, as the moſt excuſable and the leaſt culpable, in that light which diſcovers more of weakneſs than of malice, more precipitance than premeditation. It is entirely in our own choice to direct our attention more to one ſide, or more to the other. If we ſubmit to be governed by hatred and reſentment, we ſhall carefully ſeek out and fix upon every circumſtance that can magnify the guilt of our offender, or place his character and behaviour in the moſt unfavourable light, and thus theſe diſgraceful paſſions are nouriſhed in our hearts, and the victory over them becomes every day more difficult. Are we on the one hand animated by love, univerſal, cordial charity, we ſhall continually find greater pleaſure, in obſerving the good than the ill, whether in foes or in friends; we ſhall employ our perſpicacity rather in the diſcovery of the former than the latter, not ſwell venial faults into crimes, never

judge with the moſt rigorous ſeverity, be eaſily ſatisfied with probable, though not perfectly valid excuſes, and be heartily glad whenever the temper and conduct of our brother appear in a light more advantageous to him.

To the love of enemies it is requiſite thirdly, that we abſolutely ſuppreſs within us all thoughts of revenge againſt them; that we wiſh them no harm and grudge them no good; that we by no means repay them injury for injury, railing for railing, inſolence for inſolence, hatred for hatred, ſcorn for ſcorn; that we rather take ſincere ſatisfaction in their welfare, their ſucceſs in lawful affairs and undertakings, in the advancement of their fortune, and behold and conſider all this without envy, without repining, with real complacency. Difficult as this may ſeem, yet to the wiſe man, to the chriſtian, who thinks juſtly and nobly, it is by no means impoſſible. He conſiders all in its dependency on the ſupreme being and his all encircling providence and government; knowing that the evil as well as good is under his inſpection and controul; knowing that both are in the preſent ſtate of things variouſly blended together, and that man is ſeldom ſufficiently intelligent and impartial for deciding which of the two has the preponderance over the other, and therefore he, in perfect acquieſcence, leaves that deciſion and its attendant retribution, to him who alone judges right. He is ſenſible that the judgment-ſeat becomes not him, but God, and that vengeance

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in the hands of a weak and paſſionate man is far more formidable and terrible, than in the hands of almighty wiſdom and goodneſs. And, having a preponderant, leading affection for all that is beautiful and good, and exulting in the happineſs of his brethren as he does in his own, his heart and ſoul revolt againſt every temptation purpoſely to oppoſe or to diſturb it, and by any means add to the miſeries and misfortunes of mankind. His ſufferings, far from being mitigated, are only multiplied and aggravated by the ſufferings of another. To the generous man it is eaſier to ſuffer alone, than to have companions in affliction ſmarting under ſorrows occaſioned by him.

He that entertains ſuch ſentiments as theſe, will fourthly indeed omit none of the precautions which rational, well-regulated ſelf-love and prudence recommend, for ſecuring himſelf from freſh and ſtill more ſenſible injuries; he will be more guarded and cautious in his words and actions, ſtudiouſly avoiding every thing that might awaken ſurmiſes in the mind of his enemy againſt him, and expoſe him to his attacks: but then he will likewiſe uſe every means to deaden and obliterate the memory of the former injuries he had ſuſtained, and from day to day more completely to ſubdue the conſequent diſpleaſure that had ariſen in his mind againſt his adverſary, againſt his enemy. And this alſo forms an eſſential part of the precept enjoined in our text. Whoever ſeizes and employs every opportunity, every occaſion for

renewing and reviving that remembrance, whoever, as is often ſaid, though inclined to forgive, will never forget: ſuch a man will never behold the author of the anger, the indignation which he ſo induſtriouſly nouriſhes within, with complacency or goodwill; he will never converſe with him on an eaſy footing and in a placid frame of mind, can never open the avenues of his heart to tender and liberal ſentiments towards him. The recollection of him, the ſight of him will cauſe him pain, and widen the breach. And then how can any thing like love have place? No, in order that hatred and animoſity may make room for it, we muſt ſtrive to baniſh and to ſuppreſs every riſing thought that might revive any latent ſparks of diſcord, or excite and ſupport acerbity and rancour. And this the wiſe man, the chriſtian does. He has the command of himſelf, has a watchful eye upon the emotions of his heart, and contends againſt every inordinate paſſion as a foe to his perfection and happineſs.

In ſhort, a conſtituent part of this duty of loving enemies is, that we cheerfully, and according to our means, but without vanity and oſtentation, promote their ſatisfaction, their honour, their welfare, their happineſs on all proper occaſions; that we willingly perform every duty that we owe them in other reſpects and from other motives; that we do them the ſame juſtice that we ſhew to our friends; that we yield them, whenever circumſtances and the public good require it, the ſame ſervice and aſſiſtance

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as we do to the latter, that we recompenſe them not evil with evil, but even evil with good. Nothing can abſolve us from the general duties of juſtice, of equity, of civility; nothing from the obligation to ſerve and to aſſiſt each other as members of the ſame body, and to promote the happineſs of our brother, whoever he may be, and howſoever he is called. And he that is truly virtuous, that is, he who has accuſtomed himſelf, in every caſe to do that and only that which is right and fit, what is agreeable to the dictates of reaſon and to the will of God, he, fixing his eye ſteadily on what he is thus bound to do, and what is in every caſe the beſt, looks neither at the perſon whom it concerns, nor at the extrinſic profit or loſs that may accrue to him from it. He acts agreeably to the laws of truth and order, he acquits himſelf of his duty, he obeys God, he ſeeks to alleviate miſery and to promote happineſs: this is his diſtinctive character, and this character he maintains indiſcriminately towards friends and foes.

Such ſentiments, my pious hearers, and ſuch a conduct compriſe the chriſtian duty on which we are diſcourſing. Therefore, nothing contradictory, nothing impoſſible, nothing too difficult for a man of ſound judgment, and who is in purſuit of wiſdom and virtue. All that chriſtianity demands of us in this reſpect muſt be approved at the bar of ſtrict and ſound reaſon, and even the malicious, the rancorous man, muſt in thoſe moments when his paſſion is ſilent allow it to be good, to be beautiful,

to be noble. Ceaſe then, o man, o chriſtian, ceaſe to complain of this precept of religion as of a burden too heavy for thy ſtrength, and refuſe not to comply with a duty in itſelf ſo juſt and reaſonable, and in its conſequences and effects ſo ſalutary and benign. But alleviate to thyſelf the practice of it by frequently calling to mind the motives that are adapted to incite thee to it. At preſent the time will only allow me to touch briefly upon theſe motives, but, if it pleaſe God, in my next diſcourſe I ſhall illuſtrate and expound them more at large.

Conſider therefore, my chriſtian brother, if thou wouldſt excite and nouriſh in thy breaſt a real love, even for enemies, conſider, that evey thing has its good as well as its bad ſide, that no man is conſummately perfect, but likewiſe no man conſummately wicked, that every perſon in more than one reſpect is deſerving of eſteem and good-will, and every one is actually eſteemed and beloved of God, and that many more animoſities and miſunderſtandings ariſe from very venial failings, than from actual malice. — Conſider, how much eaſier it generally is to gain over an enemy by love than by hatred, by magnanimity than by vengeance, and how much more bleſſed the ſentiment of love is than the ſentiment of hatred. — Conſider how much candour and indulgence thou thyſelf haſt need of from thy brother, and frequently, commonly, how much it is rather owing to good luck than to merit, if thou art more equitable, lenient, generous, magnanimous in thy ſentiments

ſentiments and actions than another. — Conſider, that love, univerſal, ſteady, active love towards all mankind, is the firſt, the greateſt commandment of chriſtianity, and that it behoves thee as a chriſtian to do more, and to make greater progreſs in wiſdom and virtue, than ſuch as have not the good fortune to be chriſtians. — Repreſent to thyſelf in ſhort, frequently the example of Jeſus, thy captain and leader, who prayed on the croſs for the pardon of his enemies, and the example of God, thy heavenly father, who daily cauſes his ſun to ſhine upon the good and upon the wicked, and his rain to deſcend upon the juſt and the unjuſt, and thence conclude concerning what is incumbent on thee as a follower of Jeſus, as a being that is formed after the image of his creator, and who in the reſemblance and fellowſhip of him is bound to ſeek his utmoſt perfection and happineſs. Yes, conſider this right often, imprint deeply on thy heart theſe leſſons of wiſdom and religion, blend them intimately with thy whole ſyſtem of thought and perception, ſo wilt thou never be deficient in inducement and ability for fulfilling even this branch of thy duty, and for doing, for ſpontaneouſly and cheerfully doing, what is acceptable and well pleaſing to thy God.

SERMON XXVI.

Inducements to the Love of Enemies, and Examination of the Objections ſtarted againſt it.

GOD, thy commands are good and righteous altogether. This we can never deny, this we often clearly perceive. This we often ſenſibly feel: and yet it ſometimes appears difficult to obey thy commands; and yet wittingly and wilfully we ſometimes tranſgreſs them. Yes, but too often ſpirit and fleſh, reaſon and ſenſuality, the voice of truth and the clamour of tumultuous paſſions are contending within us. Thus, frequently in the hours of calm reflection, under a ſenſe of thy preſence, we clearly perceive how juſt and reaſonable, how beautiful, how noble, how grand it is to love our enemies, and to return them good for evil. We feel the dignity and delight that are attached to it, and we reſolve to comply with a duty which ſeems to us ſo venerable and holy. And then, when we are actually injured or offended, when we ought actually to demonſtrate eſteem and love to them that treſpaſs againſt us, when we ſhould actually recompenſe them good for evil, we are apt to forget both our duties and reſolutions,

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and act contrary to our perceptions and to our conviction. God, how deeply muſt this contrariety ſhame and degrade us in thy ſight and in our own! How, with ſuch incoherent conduct is it poſſible for us to become good and happy! Oh might this ſhameful inconſiſtency once ceaſe! Would there were more order, more ſolidity, more agreement among the ſeveral parts of our deportment, a greater harmony between our thoughts and actions! Did we but at all times and in all places, in the affairs of our calling as in our devotions, in the world as in the congregation of thy worſhipers, in our intercourſe with mankind as in converſe with thee, conſtantly think, judge, incline and act in ſuch manner as is agreeable to truth and duty! Teach us thyſelf to do thy will, o clement God, teach us even now to perceive it, and that in ſo lively and efficacious a manner, that we may never be wanting in incitement and energy, actually to accompliſh it, whenever we are called upon ſo to do. Open the avenues of our hearts to univerſal, chriſtian charity, even the love of our enemies, and aſſiſt us by the ſaving influences of thy holy ſpirit to diſcomfit and ſubdue whatever may riſe up within us againſt it, or detain us from it. Accompany in this deſign our reflections on the ſubject, with the abundance of thy grace and heavenly benediction. Shew us the truth in all its native luſtre, and grant that it may have a laſting influence on our minds. Theſe our ſupplications we offer up unto thee with filial boldneſs as the votaries of thy

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ſon Jeſus, through whom we aſcribe unto thee, o parent of good, unrivaled glory, and never-ending praiſe, and addreſs thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

MATTH. V. 44.

Love your enemies.

IN my former diſcourſe on theſe words I attempted, my pious hearers, to give you juſt and definite notions of the love of enemies, and thereby to place in its proper point of view a duty, the performance whereof has been ſometimes thought extremely difficult and ſometimes even impoſſible, and to repreſent it as no leſs juſt and reaſonable than adapted to our nature and abilities. In this view we endeavoured to diſtinguiſh what does not belong, though perhaps often imputed to it, from what it actually requires of us. The love of enemies conſiſts, as we have already ſeen, not in approving their bad qualities and criminal actions as reaſonable and proper; not in being inſenſible to the wrong we have ſuſtained from them; not in having the ſame complacency in an enemy as in a friend; not in never reminding one's adverſary or offender of his fault, and never ſtriving to convince him of his iniquity; in ſhort not in forbearing to take proper precautions for guarding ourſelves from future injuries. All this would be manifeſtly at variance with the nature of man and of the caſe itſelf, and whoever ſhould require it of us, would require what is impracticable

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and abſurd. No, the love of enemies conſiſts in acknowledging all the good that the enemy in other reſpects poſſeſſes and does, and in being ſincerely glad of it: in viewing and conſidering his failings and artifices and the injuries that we have ſuſtained from him, always rather on that ſide which admits of moſt palliation, than on the oppoſite; in abſolutely ſuppreſſing all thoughts of revenge againſt him, and never requiting him evil for evil; in endeavouring to obſcure and obliterate, as far as is reconcileable with neceſſary prudence and caution, the very remembrance of the injury ſuſtained; in ſhort in willingly performing every other duty towards him, and cheerfully promoting his welfare and his happineſs. Doubtleſs all this is extremely reaſonable, in perfect conformity with the laws of truth and order, and certainly not beyond the ability of the reflecting man. As however on this point our paſſions are very apt to fall into diſpute with reaſon, and may eaſily offuſcate its light and weaken its authority, it is highly neceſſary that we ſhould previouſly arm ourſelves againſt thoſe foes to our virtue and our happineſs. And to this purpoſe, my pious hearers, I ſhall devote the preſent diſcourſe. Accordingly, I ſhall firſt lay before you the chief arguments by which we are engaged and impelled to the love of enemies; and then anſwer the principal objections that may be brought againſt it.

Wouldſt thou then, my chriſtian brother, expand thy heart to the influence of this generous love, and

and eaſe thyſelf in complying with its demands; in the firſt place frequently conſider, that every one, even the moſt defective and noxious, has his good as well as his bad ſide; that no human being is entirely exempt from failings, conſummately perfect, but likewiſe that no one is entirely corrupt and uſeleſs; that coolneſs and enmity much oftener ariſe from miſunderſtandings or from very venial errors, or from miſtaken ſelf-intereſt, than from real malignity, or a ſettled purpoſe to injure and to offend. Bring to mind therefore the ſeveral good qualities, the merits that thy enemy, thy offender, in other reſpects, or in regard to other perſons, poſſeſſes; all the laudable and public-ſpirited acts he has done or is ſtill doing, as a man, as a citizen, as the friend of his friends; all the benefits, which thou thyſelf haſt perhaps formerly received, or at preſent indirectly receiveſt of him, and let this determine the verdict thou paſſeſt on him, and the diſpoſitions thou entertaineſt towards him. Conſider and judge him never ſolely by one, never ſolely by that ſide, which renders him deſpicable or dangerous in thy eyes, but always by the whole of his character, in his ſeveral relations, according to all that he is and does, and what he formerly has been and done: ſo wilt thou be ſure to find in him much that is eſtimable, and ſometimes be in a capacity to think on him with complacency, always with candour.

Conſider ſecondly, how delightful the ſentiment of love, and how painful the ſentiment of hatred is, and

and how much more eaſily the enemy may be ſoothed and won by love than by hatred. If hatred and enmity rob thee of many ſatisfactions of life, and embitter many others; if they ſometimes confine the pleaſing intercourſe with thy brethren to narrow bounds, and ſometimes mingle it with gall, and perſecute thee in retirement as well as in company with diſagreable, tormenting ideas and ſenſations: love on the contrary diffuſes peace, ſerenity, content into thy heart, allows thee the full and unmoleſted enjoyment of all the beautiful and good that thou ſeeſt and heareſt; alleviates to thee all the troubles and afflictions, and ſweetens to thee all the comforts and pleaſures of domeſtic and ſocial life. And if revenge uſually begets revenge, and this alternation of vengeance is frequently attended by a long, a dreadful train of reciprocal injuries and inſults: chriſtian charity breaks this chain of evils, linking together in its ſtead a ſeries of civilities, kind offices and benefits, ſoftens and wins by perſevering patience and ſilent magnanimity the hard heart of their opponent, converts him ſooner or later from an enemy into a friend, and if even by this means ye ſhould not ſucceed, rejoice however in the victory ye have gained over every temptation to the contrary, over every mean and ſelfiſh paſſion. And what a noble acquiſition, what a pure felicity is this!

Conſider thirdly, my friend, if thy heart reſiſts the ſummons of reaſon and chriſtianity to the love of enemies, conſider how much lenity and forbearance

thou thyſelf haſt need of from thy brethren, how great a ſufferer thou wouldſt often be, if they were to judge and treat thee with the utmoſt ſeverity, and how much it is generally owing to good luck more than to merit that thy ſentiments and conduct are more juſt, more gentle, more generous and magnanimous than another's. How great a ſhare commonly have conſtitution, education, example, accident, circumſtances of one kind or other in our diſpoſitions and behaviour towards our fellow creatures! Give God the thanks, if in theſe reſpects thou haſt the advantage over others, and take care not to forfeit or to render thyſelf unworthy of it, by treſpaſſing againſt him who treſpaſſes againſt thee, and by acting as ſelfiſhly and baſely towards him, as he has acted towards thee. Pity him for his unhappineſs, but hate him not. Couldſt thou ſee the whole combination of his thoughts, his feelings, his relative ſituations and the events of his life, thou wouldſt very often diſcover far more reaſons for compaſſion than for indignation, and even in thoſe particulars where thou ſhouldſt find him really culpable and thyſelf ſuperior to him, it would be extremely difficult for thee to fix the balance exactly between the good fortune and the misfortune, the criminality and the merit in his temper and conduct and thy own. Leave therefore that buſineſs to the ſovereign judge both of him and thee, and never forget that there is no man to whom the forbearance and tenderneſs of his fellow-creatures are not indiſpenſably neceſſary,

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and that no one without injuſtice can refuſe them to another.

Conſider fourthly, that love, univerſal, active love towards all mankind, is the great commandment, the diſtinguiſhing feature of chriſtianity, and that it behoves thee as a chriſtian to do in this reſpect more and to proceed to greater attainments in wiſdom and virtue, than ſuch as have not the good fortune to be chriſtians. What does chriſtianity proclaim, evince, teach, recommend, promiſe more than love, love of God, love of Jeſus, love of man, love of brethren, love of enemies? What renders the genuine chriſtian the wiſeſt of the wiſe, the beſt of the good, but his being animated and governed by love, the love of God and man, in whatever he does and omits to do, what he bears and forbears, what he enjoys and what he refuſes? And what bounds ſhould he ſet himſelf in theſe reſpects? He, who is called to the ſummit of human happineſs, and ought to be and to afford more than others. No, never ſhould he forget that ſolemn declaration of the Lord: if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye: do not even the publicans the ſame? If ye ſalute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans ſo? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect: your love muſt have his for its model.

In the ſame view repreſent to thyſelf laſtly, o chriſtian, the example of Jeſus, thy leader and precurſor.

ſor. Behold, how patient and reſigned he bears the moſt obſtinate contradiction and oppoſition of ſinners, the blackeſt ingratitude, the moſt barbarous perſecutions of both high and low, how he reviles not again when he is reviled, never threatens while he ſuffers, never repays evil with evil, but always evil with good, curſes with bleſſings; and hear him on the croſs, under a ſad variety of pains which rend his ſoul, praying for pardon on the very enemies that cauſe his agony, and calling to God in thoſe memorable and moving expreſſions: Father, forgive them; they know not what they do! and then o chriſtian, go, and do thou likewiſe. — Finally, raiſe thyſelf in thought to the ſupreme original of all perfection, to God, thy father in heaven, and conſider what He, the Almighty, the Infinite, does daily and hourly in regard to thee, frail, ſinful being, and in regard to all thy no leſs frail and ſinful brethren on earth; how he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt; how he ſpares all, is long ſuffering to all, is kind and bountiful to all, and ſcatters innumerable benefits even on the moſt undeſerving; and then ſtrain every nerve to vindicate thy claim to the glorious appellation of a child of God, by imitating him, thy father, in endeavouring to do whatever thou ſeeſt him do.

Strong however and convincing as theſe reaſons are, for moving us to the love of enemies, when our heart is in a calm and quiet ſtate: yet it not unfrequently

frequently revolts againſt the accompliſhment of this duty, when the paſſions lift up their voice on the oppoſite ſide, and ſtart various plauſible objections to the equity or to the practicability of it. Let us hear theſe objections, and try their validity.

May not, as probably ſome may imagine, may not the love of enemies be incompatible with the love that I owe myſelf? No, my chriſtian brother, they may both perfectly well ſubſiſt together. The former even naturally and neceſſarily flows out of the latter. Or, what is properly to love oneſelf? Is it anything elſe than to deſire and to endeavour to be happy? But canſt thou be happy if hatred and malice poſſeſs thee? Can theſe paſſions conſiſt with that ſerenity of mind, with that tranquillity and ſatisfaction of heart, with that innocency of life, with that approbation of oneſelf, with that comfort of a good conſcience, without which no true, ſubſtantial happineſs can be conceived? Can they conſiſt with that unſolicitous, frank, open, eaſy and unaffected carriage, with that confidence and cheerfulneſs, which alone can render the ſociety and converſe of our fellow-creatures agreeable to us? Are hatred and enmity ever free from perturbation, from anxiety, from troubles? Is not the ſtate into which they throw thee, always more or leſs a violent, unnatural, tormenting ſtate; ſometimes exciting in thy breaſt an anxious dread of the ſuperiority, of the ſubtlety, or the force of thy enemy, ſometimes cruel vexation at the fruſtrated projects and aims of thy ven-

geance, ſometimes corroding grief for thy impotence in revenge, or the reſtraints put upon it by the laws, by outward circumſtances, by thy own imbecility? Muſt thou not always avoid the ſight, the preſence of thy enemy, or canſt thou bear it without being ruffled, without feeling all in commotion within? Muſt thou not for that reaſon decline ſeveral companies, forego ſeveral pleaſures and entertainments, or if thou neither canſt nor wilt do ſo, lay a reſtraint upon thyſelf that changes every ſatisfaction into bitterneſs and pain? And is this to be called being happy? Is this to be called triumphing in exiſtence? Is this to be called loving oneſelf or hating oneſelf? No, if thou loveſt thyſelf, wiſheſt to be happy; love likewiſe thy brethren, love them all without exception, friends and foes, and conceive and do nothing that may render them wretched or unhappy. Without peace and ſerenity of mind, without a calm, contented heart, without a blameleſs, irreproachable life, no real happineſs is poſſible, and thoſe privileges, thoſe felicities thou canſt never acquire and enjoy, unleſs thou art animated by ſincere, univerſal love, even towards enemies.

But, again, it is frequently ſaid, how can the love of enemies be reconcilable with the proviſion for my ſafety? Will not my enemy, by my not retaliating upon him, by my teſtimonies of good will towards him, by my returning him good for evil, be the more emboldened in his hoſtile attacks and enterpriſes

priſes againſt me? If thou haſt juſt cauſe for apprehenſions of this nature, my chriſtian brother, thou art not forbid to employ the means provided by the laws for thy protection; but thou mayſt have recourſe to them without the interference of revenge, without paſſion, in calmneſs and compoſure of mind. For the very reaſon that the magiſtrate protects thee in ſuch emergencies and procures thee competent ſafety, thou haſt no need to procure it for thyſelf, and to ground thy ſafety on arbitrary and violent meaſures. If thou let juſtice take its courſe, and in ſo doing look more to the matter than to the perſon; thou mayſt fulfil all the duties of charity to the latter, however unjuſt the former may appear to thee. But even this extraneous aid thou wilt not need, in the generality of caſes where enmity may ariſe between thee and thy brother, if thy heart be open to candour, to lenity, to forgiveneſs, to magnanimity, to love. That enmity alone which is partial, which is fomented by hatred and revenge is laſting. Diſmiſs them on thy part; do not thou, becauſe of the diſagreement that has ariſen, alter either thy ſentiments or thy behaviour towards the injurious perſon; let him not perceive that thou deemeſt him thy enemy, that thou thinkeſt thyſelf injured or affronted by him; ſo will he ſoon be weary of treating thee maliciouſly; perhaps will be brought to confeſs his weakneſs, to be aſhamed of his provocations, to acknowledge thy ſuperiority and to court thy friendſhip.

If revenge be a fault, ſome thirdly allege, it is

however the fault of ſtrong and noble minds. It is only the weak, who are conſcious of their imbecility, that forgive and forget. How? which is the ſtronger and greater of the two, the freeman or the ſlave? He who has the command of himſelf, or he who is carried away and governed by his paſſion? He whoſe peace of mind and ſatisfaction are ſeated within himſelf, and cannot eaſily be diſcompoſed by external objects, or he who is put out of temper by every tart reply, every ſcornful geſture, every caſual or intentional offence, and rendered more or leſs wretched by it? Whether is it nobler or greater, patiently to ſuffer evil, or to inflict evil; to bear injury, or to commit injury? Nay, does not the thirſt of revenge and its concomitant dread of greater evils preſuppoſe the ſentiment of weakneſs? When is a man more diſpoſed to anger and reſentment than when he labours under a diſtempered mind, an infirm or ſickly body? And when is he more compoſed and calm; when is he in a better mood for ſhewing candour and magnanimity, than when he is inwardly pervaded by a lively ſenſe of his mental and corporeal energies? — And how can that degrade a man, how can that be a weakneſs in him, which gives him a ſimilitude to Jeſus, that exalted pattern of human perfection, which brings him even nearer to the deity; the deity, who with abſolute unbounded power treats ſinful man with the utmoſt tenderneſs and forbearance, with more than fatherly indulgence? No, magnanimity and the love of enemies will always be the prerogative and

the glory of noble ſouls, always a characteriſtic of true greatneſs of mind and intellectual vigour.

Neither ſay, in extenuation of its guilt: But ſtill revenge is ſweet. So in fact it is, at the moment when thou art requiting evil with evil, when thou art confounding, humiliating thy foe, making him feel thy ſuperiority. But will it likewiſe be ſo, when thy paſſion is over, when the fury of thy blood has ſubſided, when thou art returned to thyſelf, when thou muſt put theſe queſtions home: Have I acted like a generous being that has the command of himſelf, as a wiſe man, as a chriſtian, or like a baſe-born ſlave? Dare I with my wonted familiarity lift up my eyes and my heart to God, and comfort myſelf with the hopes of his approbation and favour? Dare I boaſt of being a follower of Jeſus? Will revenge ſtill be ſweet to thee, if hereafter thou ſhouldſt need favour and indulgence from thy fellow-creature, or pardon from thy God, and they then ſhould return thee like for like, and they then ſhould paſs a rigorous and mercileſs verdict on thee, the rigorous and mercileſs man? Will it ſtill be ſweet to thee, this revenge, if it ſhould fan the flames of diſcord, revive the rancour of thy enemy, rouſe him to redoubled fury againſt thee, and thus bring on a fruitful, perhaps a never-failing ſource of diſcord, of quarrels, of injuries, and inſults? Will it in ſhort, ſtill be ſweet, this revenge, when thou art ſtanding on the brink of the grave, on the borders of eternity, and muſt preſently appear before

the judge of the univerſe, and be judged and treated by him, as thou haſt here judged and treated thy brother? Oh beware of purchaſing at ſo dear a price that moment of ſweet enjoyment which revenge procures! It is the enjoyment of a honied poiſon, which quickly changes into bitterneſs and pain, and at laſt is attended with deſtruction and death.

Yes, thinkeſt thou perhaps, I am ſenſible that it is beautiful, that it is noble to forgive one's enemy, and to embrace him with benevolence and affection, and nothing ſhould prevent me from doing ſo in regard to my adverſary, were not his injuries ſo numerous, ſo highly offenſive. But the wrong he has done me, the uneaſineſs he has occaſioned me, the miſchief that he has brought upon me, is too great to be forgotten; it is impoſſible but that every thing I ſee muſt remind me of it, or for me to recollect it without diſpleaſure. Therefore, if he had only been guilty of ſome ſlight, unavoidable miſtakes, and impertinences, if his offences related merely to inſignificant trifles, if thou hadſt properly ſpeaking ſuffered or loſt nothing by them: thou wouldſt be magnanimous enough to forgive him, and abſtain from revenge. But where then is thy virtue, thy merit? How couldſt thou act otherwiſe without rendering thyſelf utterly deſpicable in thy own eyes and in thoſe of all mankind, without paſſing for an inſupportable member of ſociety? Where is the man, however narrow-minded, that does not frequently do

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as much? And what man will pretend that he derives any honour or diſtinction from ſo doing? No, virtue preſuppoſes obſtacles and difficulties, ſtruggles and warfare. The greater and more various the former, the more courage and force the latter demand; ſo much the more illuſtrious is the virtue, that vanquiſhes and ſurmounts thoſe obſtacles and difficulties, and comes off victorious from that conflict. Love of enemies is a virtue, is one of the nobleſt and ſublimeſt virtues; but it is only ſuch when it ſacrifices all to the demands of reaſon and religion, and in order to comply with their laws, neither reckons up nor weighs out the injuries and offences ſuſtained, but conſigns them all to oblivion. He who in this or in any other virtue contentedly ſtops ſhort at ſome particular degree, he who will only proceed ſo far, but no farther on the road of chriſtian perfection, will never be truly virtuous, never be perfect. The ſame principles that bind thee to the love of enemies in the former caſe, are equally obligatory in every other. The ſame bland ſentiment of dignity and grandeur, that attends the accompliſhment of thy duty in the one inſtance, attends it alſo in every other; and only then canſt thou quietly and completely enjoy that felicity, when thou art uniformly conſiſtent, and as juſt and generous in thy thoughts and actions at one time as at another. Wouldſt thou therefore avoid forfeiting all pretenſions to ſterling, chriſtian virtue, — and what would that be elſe than to renounce thy perfection and happineſs!

pineſs! — make no exceptions, where reaſon and chriſtianity grant thee no licence to make any, ſpare no conſtraint, no exertion and labour to pluck out every root of hatred, every fibre of enmity from thy heart; and never ſlacken thy diligence till thou haſt brought thyſelf to think no injury however grievous unpardonable, no enemy however culpable unworthy of all affection and good will.

Say not laſtly: yes, to forgive my enemy, not to be vindictive towards him, that I know to be poſſible, to be even a duty. But to be kind to him, to wiſh him well and to do him good, to think on him with complacency, how unnatural! How can I proceed ſuch lengths while he makes no alteration in his diſpoſitions and behaviour towards me? Indeed thou wilt never proceed ſuch lengths, if thou continue to behold and judge him only on that ſide whereby thou deemeſt him thy enemy, if thou take into conſideration only the faulty and bad that he has and does, or the treſpaſſes that he has formerly committed againſt thee. But has he then no other ſides, no other qualities, no other merits? Is the whole of him without exception corrupt and worthleſs? Is he the declared enemy of all mankind, or of all the good, and therefore he is perhaps thy enemy? Does he love nobody, does he aſſiſt and ſerve nobody? Does he abſolutely effect and promote no good at all? — Does he yield no profitable ſervice to the community? Does he fill no poſt, does he hold no office, does he carry on no buſi-

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neſs, does he tranſact no affairs by which he promotes the general welfare? — And has he always been thy enemy? Has he been perpetually injuring thee? Has he not perhaps formerly been of ſome benefit to thee and lent thee his ſervices? Canſt thou know to a certainty, that thou ſhalt never be in want of him? May he not become thy friend, thy patron, thy benefactor? — And has he not elementary qualities, has he not capacities, faculties, gifts, and endowments, that give room for farther hopes and expectations from him? Is he not as well as thou, a being in whom his ſuperior origin and his grand deſignation cannot fail of being recognized, and who is valued and loved by God, his and thy father in heaven? Is he not as well as thou deſigned for immortality, and to what degrees of wiſdom, of virtue, of perfection, may he not arrive? And ſhalt thou not be able to behold and treat him with kindneſs and complacency, as God beholds all his works? No, enlarge and refine thy notions as well as thy heart; think and judge leſs partially; be not blind to the good, the honourable, the reſpectable even in thy enemy; and dwell more upon that than upon the oppoſite bad and faulty: ſo will it never be a hardſhip to thee to embrace him with ſincere benevolence, with real affection. From what has been ſaid, my pious hearers, draw this concluſion, that all the pretexts and ſubterfuges of the paſſions againſt the love of enemies are invalid, that they cannot ſtand the teſt of reaſon and reflection,

tion, and that nothing can exempt us from the performance of a duty, not leſs eſſentially juſt and reaſonable than beneficial in its effects: and if ye acknowledge this, then follow willingly and ſteadily the precept of Jeſus in our text: Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.

SERMON XXVII.

Love the fulfilling of the Law.

GOD, thou art love. This all thy works declare, all thy commands. This is announced by nature and religion, reaſon and ſcripture, benefits and chaſtiſements; this our own heart proclaims within us. Love was and is the eternal ſource of thy ſovereign perfection and happineſs: love thou haſt decreed to be alſo the ſource of ours. To love thou haſt incited us both as men and as chriſtians; for it thou haſt deſigned us both in the preſent and in the future world. By love thou haſt taught us to ſoothe all the troubles of life, and to render the ſeveral duties of our ſtation and calling a delight: by love we are to teſtify that we are diſciples and followers of thy ſon Jeſus, and that his ſpirit lives and governs in us; by love we are to approach ever nearer to thee, our creator and father, and as beings formed after thy image, to reſemble thee more and more. And thy love, o God, is wiſe, is univerſal, impartial, immenſely efficient, unwearied, always conſiſtent. And ſuch ſhould our love alſo be: by that model of perfection ſhould we regulate our conduct.

conduct. But how far are we ſtill from it! How ungodlike, how narrow, how ſelfiſh, how dead and inactive is often that which we call love, and whereon we build our glory of being thy children and diſciples of Jeſus! Ah teach us to perceive this truth, to perceive it with conviction, that we may not boaſt of a diſtinction that we do not poſſeſs, imagine ourſelves better than we are, and thus be no longer prevented from becoming truly good and continually better. Bleſs to this end the conſiderations in which we are now about to engage. Grant that we may liſten to them with attention and docility, apply them impartially to ourſelves, and pay a willing obedience to what the ſpirit of truth and love ſhall tell us. We pray unto thee for theſe benefits as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

ROM. xiii. 10.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

THE ſame virtues and vices do not uniformly bear ſway among mankind. Sometimes one kind gets the upper hand, ſometimes another, according as one ſort of principles or another are more or leſs popular, according as the inſtruction, the education, the way of thinking, the taſte, the external circumſtances of a people are bent and modified. — Our ſaviour reproved the phariſees of his time and their adherents

adherents for paying tithes of mint and aniſe and cummin with ſcrupulous punctuality, for making clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, and ſtrictly obſerving the traditions of the elders, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, mercy and beneficence. Of our times and of the ſociety to which we belong, we might in regard to the prevailing temper and the general conduct, affirm the direct contrary. Love, mercy, beneficence ſeem now with many to be every thing, while piety, devotion, public worſhip, church ceremonies, are of little or no account. We are become more acutely ſenſible, more compaſſionate, more bountiful, we form perhaps juſter eſtimates of the value and true end of temporal property, we prefer enjoyment to mere poſſeſſion, and allow others to partake more of it. The change, on the whole, is unqueſtionably good, and our chriſtians, take them for all in all, are certainly better than thoſe phariſaical hypocrites. I might even venture to aſſert, that God loves the human race ſo well, is ſo liberally diſpoſed towards them, that he had rather ſee us neglect his ſervice than their's, treſpaſs againſt him than treſpaſs againſt them. Properly ſpeaking, however, the two kinds of duties are ſo cloſely linked together, that one cannot ſubſiſt without the other. And why ſhould we therefore pretend to put them aſunder? Why not endeavour in all points to be virtuous, to be entirely good? The only conſequence that can poſſibly attend this ſeparation is, that we ſhall not be truly good and

and virtuous in any one point. — — This particularly holds good concerning charity and beneficence. They are extolled by all men, all men boaſt of them. Nobody would be thought inſenſible, hard hearted. But are we equally jealous of the honour of being truly pious, truly devout, truly chriſtian-minded? Do we feel as much affronted if any one charges us with a want of religion, if any one would detain us from private or public worſhip? Muſt not however this exorbitant, excluſive value which we put upon mercy and beneficence, be detrimental to the moral improvement of mankind in general? How many other duties are on that account omitted, or under that pretence but negligently and rarely obſerved?

Though the high eſtimation in which charity is held, particularly in our days, is very general, yet that which paſſes currently for it is perhaps but ſeldom deſerving of that honourable appellation. Chriſtian charity is extremely comprehenſive. It preſuppoſes in the perſon who is animated by it, a number of other virtues, a high degree of moral excellence, and for this reaſon the apoſtle in our text calls it the fulfilling of the law. Let us ſomewhat more circumſtantially inquire into this matter, my pious hearers, by conſidering the true nature of charity, what influence it ought to have upon our temper and conduct, in order to be really the fulfilling of the law.

In order that love, the love of our neighbour, may be the fulfilling of the law, the root and germ of all the other virtues, the ſoul of our moral conduct,

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it muſt proceed from ſound principles, it muſt, as the apoſtle in another place ſays, ariſe out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned. It muſt therefore not be the mere effect of animal ſympathy, of the diſagreeable, painful impreſſions occaſioned by the ſight of a wretched object or the lively repreſentation of his miſery. Neither muſt it be ſimply an effect of ſelf-love, which induces us to love them who ſhew us civilities, procure us pleaſure, yield us ſervices, lend us their intereſt or their abilities, promote our views, or in any other way are the inſtruments and means whereby our happineſs is augmented or confirmed. No, true charity is founded upon the inward eſteem and reſpect for man as man; and this eſteem, this reſpect is founded on the juſt and adequate conceptions we form of human nature, its energies and its deſignation: it is founded on our complacency in whatever is beautiful and good and perfect, or is however capable of greater perfection: it is founded on love to God, the creator and father of men, who inſpires us with delight in all his works, and eſpecially in thoſe, that like us are formed after his own image, that like us can know him, worſhip him, have communion with him. If ye therefore do not recognize, do not feel the dignity of human nature; imagine yourſelves and your brethren ſimply duſt, entirely ſenſual, terrene creatures, which to-day are and to-morrow totally ceaſe to be; if ye reſpect and honour a man, not inaſmuch as he is a man,

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but inaſmuch as he is a rich, great, powerful, well-dreſſed man; if though you diſpenſe your bounty to the mean, to the poor man, yet deſpiſe him becauſe he is mean and poor, are aſhamed of having any connection and any friendly intercourſe with him, exact of him a ſlaviſh ſubmiſſion, ſpeak to him in a haughty, imperious tone, ſcare him away with your ſcowling brow, your dark looks, aſſume a great ſuperiority over him in your own conceit, fill his hand with money and his heart by the manner in which you give it him, with grief and pain, in ſhort, treat him as though you were in fact ſomewhat more than he, or beings of a ſuperior order; if ye deride any one on account of his natural weakneſs and infirmity, on account of his deformity or the accidentally maimed or diſtorted figure of his body, on account of the poverty of his underſtanding, his ſagacity, his wit, on account of his deficiency in particular outward profeſſions of kindneſs and civility, in elegant accompliſhments, in politeneſs, or in thoſe manners which here or there now or then happen to be in vogue, or what is otherwiſe called good-breeding, view him for that reaſon, with ſcornful eyes, with jeering ſmiles, with forbidding looks; call in queſtion as it were his right to the appellation of a man, and degrade him, whether in jeſt or in earneſt, to a level with the irrational animals or ſtupid brutes, to uſe the common expreſſion on ſuch occaſions; if ye honour not in man that which forms his higheſt diſtinction, his inherent nobleneſs, the image of God,

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his creator, if the contemplation of mankind does not elevate your ſoul to him who made them, inſpire you with delight in this moſt beautiful, moſt perfect of his works on earth, with exultation in his wiſdom and benignity, and cauſe you to feel the connection with your brethren as an honour and felicity; if this be not the caſe, if on the contrary you are guilty of theſe criminal failings, however profuſe your alms, however copious the tears of compaſſion you ſhed on particular affecting occaſions, your alms, your tears, your pity do not yet conſtitute true, genuine charity, flow not from pure founts, are only the effects of a tranſient, but not predominant benevolence, deeply ſeated in the ſoul, the animating principle of all its faculties, not the fruit of a pious, chriſtian joy in God and man; it cannot therefore poſſibly be the fulfilling of the law, cannot poſſibly ſupply the place of ſo many neglected duties, ſo many ſlighted virtues.

In order ſecondly that love, the love of our neighbour, may be the fulfilling of the law, may be ſo conſtituted as to imply that we poſſeſs a wiſe, virtuous, pious diſpoſition, and be conſidered as the epitome of all good ſentiments and affections, it muſt be univerſal, it muſt extend over all mankind. Real, genuine charity, values and honours, as we before obſerved, man as man; it embraces him with benevolence, becauſe he is a man, a rational, immortal being, in the likeneſs of God, and is our brother, and not ſimply becauſe he belongs to our family, to

the circle of our friends, to this and not to another civil or religious community, to this and not to another country, and not becauſe he lives in this and no other ſtyle, is of this and not of an inferior or a ſuperior rank, entertains theſe and no other opinions, follows theſe and no other principles and practices; and not merely becauſe he has done us ſome acts of kindneſs, becauſe we cannot well do without him, becauſe his favour may be uſeful to us, or becauſe at leaſt he has never offended us, has never been nor can ever be our competitor for any kind of emolument or pleaſure. No, theſe are indeed circumſtances that may increaſe our goodwill towards certain perſons, and attach us more cloſely and intimately to them, but to confine that goodwill to theſe perſons, and to ſhut out all others from it, is by no means true, genuine charity. If ye therefore have an inward affection for thoſe perſons who are allied to you by blood, or connected with you by the ties of particular friendſhip, and ſhew the utmoſt tenderneſs towards them, yet towards the reſt, the ſo much greater part of the family of God, our common father, are cold and indifferent; if ye willingly ſhew all poſſible civilities, and do all manner of kind offices to thoſe who form a part of the companies you uſually frequent, and who partake in your amuſements and paſtimes, but towards ſuch as do not enjoy your confidential intercourſe, you ſhew yourſelves hard, uncomplying, diſinclined, unſociable, uncivil; if ye go ſtill farther, and, while you take a cordial

cordial intereſt in all that relates to your fellow-ſubjects, and the welfare of the town or the country which you inhabit, you treat all that concerns perſons more remotely ſituated, or even adjacent countries and people, as trifling matters, or perhaps rejoice in the calamities they ſuffer, or the misfortunes that befall them; if ye ſhew every ſort of reſpect to thoſe who are of the ſame rank with you, live upon the ſame footing of expenſe, lead the ſame kind of life, and purſue the ſame entertainments and diverſions with you, and are ſincerely attached to them, but regard perſons of humbler ſtation with ſcorn, thoſe of higher rank with envy and jealouſy, and find no complacency in thoſe who are employed in other uſeful matters, occupy different ſtations in ſociety, or who purſue a more quiet, retired courſe of life, and ſet very little value on their good qualities and deſerts; if you open your heart only to thoſe who admit as true the ſame religious doctrines which you admit as true, and obſerve the ſame ceremonies in divine worſhip as you obſerve, but contract it, ſhut it up, or perhaps only open it to hatred and contempt, if your brother diſſents from you in opinions and ideas, worſhips the ſupreme being under another name or with other ſolemn rites, and according to your apprehenſion is in error; if ye laſtly love indeed thoſe who love you, wiſh well and do good to thoſe who wiſh you well and do good to you, but do not forgive your miſtaken brother his errors, hate him who does not wiſh you well, never

think on him who has offended you without diſpleaſure and rancour, and long to repay him evil for evil: if your love be ſo confined, ſo warped, ſo partial, ſo ſelf-intereſted, it cannot poſſibly be true, genuine charity, it can never be any proof of a pious, virtuous temper, it cannot be the fulfilling of the law, it cannot cover any ſins, ſupply the place of any neglected duties. It is, as our ſaviour ſpeaks, neither more nor leſs than ſuch love as the heathens and publicans, the moſt depraved of mankind, can afford, for they alſo think and act in like manner.

In order thirdly that the love of our neighbour ſhould be the fulfilling of the law, a proof of the predominant love of whatever is good and proper, and as it were the compendium of all the duties of virtue and godlineſs, it muſt extend to the entire welfare of man, take in the whole of his corporeal and intellectual, preſent and future happineſs. And what a long catalogne is here preſented to our view? Life, health, food, raiment, good repute, reſpect and honour, pleaſure and ſatisfaction; knowledge, wiſdom, virtue, piety, the hope of a better, everlaſting life, and the capacity for it. All this muſt be dear to the man who is animated by real charity; all this he muſt hold ſacred reſpecting his brother; all this he muſt endeavour to the utmoſt of his ability, to ſupport, to protect, to promote. And what attention, what prudence, what activity it requires! Can a few ſympathetic tears, a few acts of bounty or liberality here be the fulfilling of the law? — If ye there-

fore indeed give bread to the poor, but by calumnies and ſlander rob the honeſt man of his good name, which is no leſs and perhaps more valuable to him, than bread is to the former; if ye revive the heart of the widow or the orphan by aſſiſtance and ſupport, but at the ſame time wound the heart of others of your brethren by pride, by vanity, by unfriendly, ſcornful, harſh treatment, if ye indeed weep over the wretch who is afflicted by ſickneſs or pain, or has met with ſome cruel misfortune, but make the ſtill more wretched, the wicked and vicious, the ſlave of degrading luſts and paſſions, the object of your laughter and mirth, and are diverted with his follies and extravagance, which ought to excite emotions of ſorrow not of joy in your breaſt; if ye indeed cloath the naked, but refuſe him who is entirely deſtitute of knowledge and wiſdom and virtue, the opportunity and the means of information and improvement, which ye are able to give him; if indeed ye are patient and indulgent towards thoſe who are out of bodily health and ſtrength, but if ye ſhew no lenity and forbearance towards thoſe whoſe mental capacity is weak, whoſe mind lies ſick of deep rooted prejudices and errors, or decayed by inordinate appetites and affections; if ye indeed give drink to the thirſty, refreſh him in his enterpriſes and occupations, and promote his external welfare, but at the ſame time ſeduce others by evil example, by indiſcreet and offenſive diſcourſe, by contempt of God and religion to wantonneſs, to unbelief, to ſin;

if indeed ye labour with zeal for the good of the city, the country, the community to which ye belong, by eagerly encouraging thoſe arts, thoſe branches of commerce, thoſe trades and manufactures which are carried on by your brethren, but to the cauſe of truth, of virtue, of religion, of chriſtianity are totally indifferent, and exert not all the efforts in your power to extend and to eſtabliſh the kingdom of God and of Jeſus Chriſt, wherein however alone conſummate felicity is enjoyed; if ye indeed take pains to render the road through this ſhort, terreſtrial life ſmoother, eaſier, pleaſanter to your brethren, but render the path to that better, eternal life by any means more difficult, or their hopes of attaining it more doubtful to them; if in this manner your charity takes in only a part or ſome few parts of the integral ſum of human welfare, its activity is confined only to a few ſorts of good wiſhes, of aids and kind offices, and in regard to all the reſt ye remain inert and indifferent, can that be true, genuine charity, can that be the fulfilling of the law?

Nor can it any more be ſo, unleſs it fourthly render us willing and prepared for various kinds of ſelf-denial and ſacrifices. This is grounded in the very nature of real, cordial affection; it ſeeks not barely its own, ſometimes prefers the profit or the pleaſure of others to its own profit and pleaſure, bears what otherwiſe another muſt bear, reſtricts itſelf to allow more room to others, and reckons nothing as loſt which may promote human happineſs.

But

But is that ſacrificing, to give alms only of one's ſuperfluity, to leave to others what we can no longer uſe or enjoy, to be moved to tears at the ſight of the miſerable? It is certainly kind and humane, and the reverſe would be inhuman and unjuſt. But I cannot term this demonſtration of charity ſacrificing, I cannot take it for more than the very firſt and eaſieſt exertions of it. No, that is ſacrificing when, in matters that do not affect religion and virtue, I inſiſt not pertinaciouſly on having my own way, but yield to the inclination of others, and prefer their ſatisfaction to my own. That is ſacrificing, when I forego any innocent pleaſures, or lawful accommodations, in order the more effectually to relieve the afflicted and diſtreſſed. — That is ſacrificing, when I do not all that I ſhould be juſtified in doing by my ſituation and fortune, in order not to induce others, who, though in the ſame ſituation, have not the ſame means, to do more than they could afford without injury to themſelves and their families. — That is ſacrificing, when I prefer the company of the ſorrowful, the ſick, the troubled in mind, who are in want of my conſolation, my ſupport, my advice, whom I perhaps may be able to ſoothe, cheer, encourage, to a ſociety of gay and proſperous people, where I might expect one continued ſcene of mirth and entertainment. — That is ſacrificing, when I accommodate myſelf to all, endeavour to procure profit and ſatisfaction to every one, not in my own peculiar way, but in his, and according to his parti-

cular capacity, and do not require him to give up his inclination or his free-agency, renounce his opinion and his way of thinking, or ſuppoſe him to exiſt only or principally for my ſake. — That is ſacrificing, when I, in order to improve, to comfort any one, or be uſeful to him in any kind of way, allow him to pour out his thoughts, prejudices, errors, complaints, freely into my boſom, though what he has to ſay be ever ſo falſe and groundleſs, ever ſo exaggerated, ever ſo tedious, ever ſo notorious, and conſequently dull and unpleaſant to me, yet deterred by no former ill ſucceſs, I return to the charge as often, and continue my attempts as long, as any hope remains, of informing him, of correcting him, of ſoothing him. — That is in ſhort ſacrificing, when I, for the ſake of promoting the welfare of the whole community, in my ſtation and calling, ſpare neither pains, nor labour, nor fatigue, and immediately whenever my duty requires it, put all my comforts, my health and my life in jeopardy, and ſtand forth manfully in its defence. — Whoever is not willing and prepared for ſuch ſacrifices, whoever does not continually exerciſe himſelf in them, let him not boaſt of that real, genuine charity which was exemplified to us by Jeſus, and which he recommends to his followers, or let him at leaſt confeſs, that his charity is ſtill very weak and diminutive, extremely imperfect, that however ſuch as it is, it cannot poſſibly be the fulfilling of the law, the law of Chriſt.

To conclude, in order to be that, my pious hearers,

it muſt not be irreconcileable with any other duties and virtues; it muſt rather ſupply us with motives and ability for the moſt punctual diſcharge and practice of them. That is not real charity, if I be bountiful to one and unjuſt to another, compaſſionate to the diſtreſſed, and proud and malevolent to the proſperous; if I freely beſtow alms, but do not gladly afford perſonal ſervices to others; if I have a tender, ſenſible, but at the ſame time an unclean and unchaſte heart, relieve the poor, but ſeduce the innocent, or ſerve my brethren ſolely with my purſe, but not with my mental abilities. — That is not charity, it is hypocriſy, it is ſervility of mind, if I for fear of affronting any one, or of acquainting him with ſomething diſagreeable, conſent to all that he ſays, approve whatever he does, and therefore renounce my veracity, infringe the rights of virtue, perhaps make a jeſt of religion and chriſtianity, in order not to deſtroy the ſatisfaction of the enemy of truth, the follower of vice, the ſcoffer. — That is not charity, it is weakneſs, it is criminal compliance, if I, for the ſake of diverting ſomebody, of helping him to while away his time, of rendering ſome party of pleaſure more agreeable or leſs expenſive to him, ſuffer myſelf to be perſuaded by him to decline my attendance on public worſhip, to neglect my exerciſes of devotion or my family duties, or my buſineſs, and therefore ſacrifice matters of importance, of neceſſity, to ſuch as are of no conſequence, and might as well be done at one time as at another.

That

That is not charity, it is partiality, it is injuſtice, if to pleaſe my friend, I implicitly enter into all the antipathies, animoſities, jealouſies, and reſentments which he entertains againſt others; and without farther inquiry, without reaſonable motives, reſpect, love and praiſe only thoſe whom he reſpects and loves and praiſes, and am inimical to all thoſe whom he deems his enemies. — That is not charity, it is partiality, it is injuſtice, if I overlook every thing in my friend, impute all to good motives, bear him out in all particulars, and rigorouſly judge him who is not my friend, charge every failing to him at its full amount, deny or extenuate his merits, tarniſh or call in queſtion every one of his good actions, and therefore, in the expreſſion of holy writ, to keep two meaſures and two weights, and now to act as a weak and corrupt, and now as an auſtere and unjuſt judge. — That is in fine not charity, it is infamouſly to engage in conſpiracy againſt mankind, if I attach myſelf ſolely to one party, excluſively adhere to one ſociety, do my utmoſt to favour, to patronize, to defend, to elevate, to extend that party, that ſociety alone, and oppoſe myſelf to all, am indifferent to all, endeavour to fruſtrate all that has any tendency to the wellbeing or to the honour of another party, another ſociety. — — No, real charity neglects not ſome duties, in order the more completely to fulfil others. Every duty is ſacred, inviolable to the charitable man, becauſe he knows that every duty promotes the welfare of mankind in general;

general, and that no one can be violated without impairing or deſtroying human happineſs in one way or another.

And thus, my pious hearers, muſt charity be conſtituted, in order that it may be the fulfilling of the law. Try now your charity by theſe characteriſtics, interrogate yourſelves, whether it flows from right principles, from a cordial delight in God and his children, your brethren, from a proper appreciation of their nature and powers; whether it embraces all mankind with inward benevolence; extends to all the various kinds of their welfare and proſperity; makes you willing and ready for all kinds of generous ſacrifices; and never induces you to ſlight or neglect other duties and virtues. Thence infer, how much it includes, what generous, pious ſentiments and diſpoſitions, what a circumſpect, edifying carriage, what a diverſified activity in good it requires, ere we can be juſtified in conferring or accepting that lofty, but ſo ſeldom rightly underſtood and ſo often profaned title of a charitable man. Are ye ambitious of that honour, the honour of the beſt and worthieſt of mankind, ye muſt ſtrive to be entirely good, virtuous and godly throughout, to love both God and man, juſtice as well as mercy, and learn to employ your mental faculties as well as your temporal property in the moſt generally uſeful way. Continue therefore to be ſympathizing and compaſſionate; become ſo more and more; ſtrew even there, where you expect to reap nothing; do good

and

and never be weary in well-doing. But be not contented with this. Learn to value man as man; embrace with cordial goodwill the whole ſpecies, whether near or remote, more or leſs connected with you, whether thinking in one manner, or another, whether friends or foes; provide for their ſeveral neceſſities, their ſatisfaction and their happineſs; ſuffer for them willingly; ſurrender for them liberally; and with all this be faithful to your duties. Then, but only then, will ye enjoy the entire felicity of a real, active, chriſtian charity, and hereafter receive the conſummate reward of it in the pureſt delight in God and his creatures, and in the moſt glorious enlargement of the ſphere of your generally uſeful activity.

SERMON XXVIII.

On the Meaſure of Beneficence; and ſome Arguments in behalf of copious Bounty.

GOD, great as is thy power, great is alſo thy benignity. Both of them are infinite, both extend over all that is and ever will be. Yes, thou art eſſential love, thou never ceaſeſt to diſpenſe light and life and joy and happineſs upon the whole immenſe domain of thy creation, and to do good is thy ſupreme delight. We moſt humbly adore thee as our creator and father, and rejoice in being under thy dominion and providence, in being thy creatures, thy children. Oh that we were continually actuated by the tender, charitable, beneficent ſpirit that alone can render us worthy to be called thy offspring! Thou wouldſt have us all as ſuch to imitate thee, our heavenly father, and in ſome ſort to partake with thee in the pleaſure of doing good. Therefore haſt thou diſtributed thy bounties amongſt us in ſuch different proportions, and ſubjected us to ſo many viciſſitudes and adverſe events in this lower world. They are deſigned to confirm us in the generous ſentiments of compaſſion, of mercy, of helpfulneſs, of magnanimity, to inure

inconvenience, as he is no conſiderable loſer by it; in ſhort, who is no farther ſo than ſcarcely to be aware or ſenſible that he is doing good, he certainly has no right to boaſt of the virtue of beneficence. He contracts it ſo much that it no longer merits this title. Beneficence muſt be a buſy, governing affection in our breaſts, impelling us to deny ourſelves many things that may otherwiſe be dear to us, and to do many things that otherwiſe might not be agreeable. It muſt be elaſtic and expanſive in proportion as the wants and diſtreſſes of our brethren increaſe. It muſt inſpire us with the ſentiments which the apoſtle in our text recommends us to adopt: Let us not be weary in well-doing. To rouſe and refreſh theſe ſentiments in you, my pious hearers, is the deſign of my diſcourſe to-day, and the quality of the times and circumſtances in which we live will fully juſtify me in the choice I have made of this ſubject. I ſhall therefore, humbly truſting in the divine approbation, endeavour firſt by a few obſervations on the meaſure of beneficence, to ſhew you the method of aſcertaining how far it ought to go for deſerving the title of a truly chriſtian virtue. Afterwards I ſhall furniſh you with a few arguments for inciting and enabling you to practiſe beneficence in a more abundant meaſure than is uſually done.

That in the firſt place our beneficence may deſerve the title, not only of a moral, but a chriſtian virtue, that is, a virtue in the ſenſe of the chriſtian doctrine and its author, we muſt beſtow not merely

of our ſuperfluity, we muſt not only give that to the poor and needy, which we cannot uſe ourſelves, what is a ſort of incumbrance to us, or what would even ſpoil were we not to give it away. What ſenſible man, who was not plunged in the extremity of diſtreſs, but would diſdain ſuch a gift? What ſenſible man, who was not ſinking under total deſtitution, would think himſelf obliged to gratitude by ſuch a gift? And ſhall we preſume to imagine that by ſuch inſignificant alms, we pleaſe God, teſtify our obedience to him, fulfil our duty, or capacitate ourſelves for the rewards of virtue in the future world? If therefore the rich man gives the garments which he can no longer wear, victuals which he cannot conſume, the money which he had given up for loſt, or which is undeſerving his notice for expenditure or intereſt, to the naked, the hungry, the poor, he certainly does well, and if he did not act thus it would be mean and diſgraceful; but if he do no more than this, he will aſſuredly neither with God nor with wiſe and worthy men deſerve the appellation of a virtuous benefactor to his brethren. No, my pious hearers, the virtue which coſts us nothing, which demands of us neither renunciation nor ſacrifice, is not genuine virtue. Alms that we take from a uſeleſs, or perhaps even from a cumberſome ſuperfluity, are not the ſacrifices that are well pleaſing unto God, however conſiderable they may be in themſelves. The kind and good offices which we afford to others, without any detri-

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ment at all to our convenience or pleaſure, that require no extraordinary exertion of our faculties, are of no particular worth. No, virtue, as we have already ſaid, with every moraliſt, is the conqueſt of the luſts and affections. It incites us to what is agreeable to truth and equity, without regard to our temporal benefit, and often with the voluntary abnegation of it. We muſt know and feel that we are doing good, if we would glory in the virtue of beneficence. We muſt take that which we give to the poor and needy from what is truly and properly our own, that is, from what we ourſelves could, and what we in other circumſtances ſhould uſe, for rendering it the benefaction of a good heart endeavouring to pleaſe God. If therefore the rich or affluent man gives the garment which he ſtill might creditably wear, the meat which he could reliſh himſelf, the money that he might turn to profit; in ſhort, if he beſtows that which he might with propriety expend, according to his quality and means, on his accommodation, or on his pleaſures, or on his dreſs, but which expenſe he may ſave without injury to his health, or rendering himſelf contemptible in the eyes of ſenſible perſons, if he beſtows that on his indigent brethren, if he employs it to the promotion of human happineſs, and is more glad at having done ſo, than if he had himſelf enjoyed it, he then gives an actual proof that he is no ſtranger to the virtue of beneficence, and the oftener he acts thus, the more ſuperfluities he denies himſelf in this reſpect, the more he reduces his

perſonal expenſes, that he may be the more bountiful to others, the more does his beneficence deſerve to be denominated a virtue. It would in reality ſignify but little, it would not even equal the beneficence of many a well-diſpoſed chriſtian of moderate means, if he exerted it ſolely from what he calls his ſuperfluity. Our wants, whether natural or artificial commonly increaſe with increaſing riches. The generality of the opulent are in this predicament. They wiſh to live and to appear as people in affluence are wont to do. Accordingly they form to themſelves numberleſs neceſſaries in regard to their table, their dreſs, their houſehold furniture, their accommodations and pleaſures. Their expenſes of this nature often perhaps bear a pretty accurate proportion to the whole of their income. How little then will they comparatively be able to beſtow in doing good to the poor and needy, if they only ſet apart for that purpoſe what remains over the ſum of their ſtated annual expenditure?

That ſecondly our beneficence may have a legitimate claim to the title of a virtue, a chriſtian virtue, we ſhould not let it reſt as long as poſſible in merely tender diſpoſitions, or contract it as much as we can, till we have ſaved and amaſſed ſo much, that we need be under no apprehenſion of ever feeling any want of the neceſſaries, or the accommodations and elegances of life. He who requires ſuch an abſolute ſecurity, and builds his hopes of it on the poſſeſſion of temporal, tranſitory goods, requires on one

hand a thing impoſſible, and reſts his hopes on extremely weak and crumbling foundations; and on the other hand is guilty of a very culpable diſtruſt of God and his good providence, a diſtruſt that is manifeſtly irreconcileable with the character of a ſincere worſhipper of the deity, and a real chriſtian; both utterly inconſiſtent with the virtue of beneficence; both neceſſarily repugnant to every compaſſionate and generous affection of the ſoul, and gradually conducing to inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart. No, our beneficence, for being a chriſtian virtue, acceptable in the ſight of heaven, muſt be combined with a firm reliance on the divine providence; it muſt be a demonſtration of this reliance, and an exerciſe of it; and this it cannot be if I am reſolved not to do good and diſtribute till I have provided for myſelf, my family and a diſtant poſterity. In ſo doing I ſhould act as though my fortune and the fortune of my deſcendants entirely depended on me; I ſhould thus leave nothing to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs except what I am abſolutely forced to leave; I ſhould thus only ſo far truſt in the promiſes of God as they have already been fulfilled to me, and I have in hand what was promiſed. But is this to be called truſting in God? Is this to be child-like affected towards the heavenly father? No, to truſt in God implies, to expect of him that if I faithfully diſcharge my duties he will let me want for nothing in future that is needful to my real happineſs, and to honour him, this affectionate heavenly father, implies contentedly

tentedly to reſign to him the allotment and regulation of my future fortunes, in full aſſurance, that it will be as propitious and beneficial to me as my behaviour, my ſtation and the welfare of the whole family of God here upon earth will allow. But how can I better evince this truſt in God, theſe child-like diſpoſitions towards him, than by beſtowing freely, without any anxious cares about the future, a part of what perhaps I may hereafter have occaſion for, on thoſe who are at preſent deſtitute of all, and at the ſame time doubting not, that the God who now through me provides for theſe diſtreſſed objects, will likewiſe provide for me and mine in all ſucceeding times? Yes, my friends, this is godly beneficence, this is beneficence grateful to the deity, and entitles us to be called his children. Such a beneficence is real virtue, for thereby I reſiſt my ſenſual, earthly inſtincts, I ſubdue my infidel, miſtruſtful heart, I look more at the inviſible than the viſible, and let that which is right and fit and agreeable to the divine will, have more weight with me than any other conſiderations and concerns whatever. Conſider this, all ye who are ſo frequently apt to let an over anxious ſolicitude for the future welfare of your children prevent you from being beneficent in a more abundant meaſure. Keep this ſolicitude within ſuch bounds as to render it conſiſtent with confidence in God and your obligations to the reſt of ſociety; and be perſuaded, that in moſt caſes you are working, not at the real

happineſs, but at the ruin of your children, by endeavouring to leave them ſuch a fortune as ſhall place them in a ſituation that requires them to do little or nothing in order to live agreeably to their ſtation. Your bounty to the poor and friendleſs will for ever remain a bleſſing to your poſterity: whereas the property that you amaſs for them by the omiſſion and neglect of this duty, may eaſily prove to them a ſnare and a misfortune.

To conclude, that our beneficence may deſerve the appellation of a virtue, a chriſtian virtue, we certainly ſhould not ſpend more, and in hard times we ſhould certainly ſpend leſs, on our pleaſures and accommodations, than on the relief that we owe to our neceſſitous brethren. This is a third obſervation that may afford us ſome direction how far we ought to go in our beneficence, in what proportion we ſhould exert it. That we ſhould prefer our own ſuſtenance to the ſuſtenance of others, that we ſhould firſt provide for our own wants, and afterwards for theirs, is a principle grounded in our very nature, and almoſt always a duty. But that we ſhould indulge in pleaſures, amuſements and gratifications which we might very eaſily diſpenſe with, and not do as much, or even more for thoſe who are in want of neceſſaries, or languiſhing in various kinds of miſery, this, methinks, is abſolutely irreconcileable with the temper of a true chriſtian, heartily deſirous of emulating his beneficent ſaviour. I have no conception how my heart could be perfectly at eaſe

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in the enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures, thoſe amuſements, thoſe gratifications, however innocent and allowable, how I could enjoy them in a grateful and glad ſentiment of the divine goodneſs, unleſs I diffuſe at leaſt as much or even more ſatisfaction and joy among my unfortunate brethren? How I could endure ſuch reflections as theſe: Now, while I am at ſo much expenſe to procure myſelf a few mirthful days or hours, now, while I am laying out ſo much on the ornaments of my dreſs, or in gratifying my capricious appetite, or on other ſuperfluous objects, ſuch numbers of my brothers and ſiſters are pining in want and wretchedneſs of various kinds, are now languiſhing under the preſſure of ſolicitudes about their ſuſtenance, of pains, of ſickneſſes, of poverty and diſtreſs, and I have done ſo little to refreſh them, and to render their condition more tolerable? Oh let theſe thoughts be often preſent to your minds, my dear friends, in their livelieſt colours; ſo will ye be far better able than I can to ſay how far your beneficence ought to reach, and your very pleaſures will impel you to it if ye enjoy them with reflection as behoves rational creatures. Yes, my pious hearers, an innocent, ſocial joy, which exhilarates without intoxicating the mind, diſpoſes a man to all good actions, but more eſpecially to acts of bounty and liberality; when he feels how happy he is, and how happy they are that ſurround him, when he feels how much good God has done, and is ſtill doing him, nothing is more natural than the wiſh that

all the reſt of mankind might fare as well, and if at that time we apply to him for aſſiſtance and relief in their behalf, he will not eaſily refuſe it. Enjoy ye therefore ſuch innocent ſatisfactions as expand the heart and prepare it for beneficence, then give admittance to your poor, neceſſitous brethren, ſpeak comfort to them by yourſelf and others, and ſanctify your joy by demonſtrating that you are the cheerful giver whom God declares he loves.

Suffer me now, my friends, to add a conſideration or two more for inducing you to practiſe the virtue of beneficence in that meaſure or to that extent which, in purſuance of the foregoing obſervations, we are indiſpenſably bound to do. I can compriſe theſe conſiderations in few words. Learn to form juſt eſtimates of the worth of riches, of mankind, of the preſent life, ſo ſhall you never be wanting in motives to a liberal and unwearied beneficence.

Study therefore, firſt to form a proper eſtimate of wealth, ſtudy to underſtand the true value of the temporal goods which ye poſſeſs. To that end, engage your thoughts in ſome ſuch meditations as theſe: External objects are of any particular worth to me only inaſmuch as they contribute ſomewhat to my ſupport or to the advancement of my perfection. This, therefore, wealth ought likewiſe to do, if I am to conſider it as a benefit, as ſomething deſirable. And how does it anſwer this purpoſe? How is it calculated to advance my perfection? Is it by the acquiſition,

acquiſition, or the poſſeſſion, or the uſe of it, that I ſhall become more perfect, that is to ſay, more wiſe and virtuous? The acquiſition of wealth may indubitably contribute much to that end, if I employ no other than fair and lawful means in purſuit of it, if I purſue it in the way of my duty and my calling. For thus my mind is ſet in motion, I exerciſe its faculties, multiply its perceptions, learn to act reaſonably and conſiderately, I gain opportunities and motives for exerciſing myſelf in ſeveral virtues. But now the wealth is acquired. The queſtion therefore is, whether the bare poſſeſſion or the actual uſe of it renders me more accompliſhed? The poſſeſſion conſiſts in nothing beſides the idea, that ſuch or ſuch a quantity of gold and ſilver is mine, and that I can uſe it as I pleaſe in different ways and to different purpoſes. But though I ſhould a hundred or a thouſand times repeat this idea, I cannot conceive how my ſoul could become more perfect, more wiſe and virtuous by it, than it was before, ere it had gotten this idea. Nay, I am ſure that it can no otherwiſe become ſo than by the beſt application of its faculties, by wiſe and virtuous actions. I can however exerciſe theſe faculties of my mind, I can perform theſe wiſe and virtuous actions, by making a good uſe of my wealth. It is not therefore the bare poſſeſſion, but the uſe of riches, that muſt confer upon them their real worth. But how then am I to make a good, how the beſt uſe of them? Upon myſelf, that is for the ſupport of my life and my health,

health, and the gratification of an unbridled appetite, for the pleaſures of ſenſe, I can conſume but a very ſmall proportion, ſince riches are by no means requiſite to this, but ſomewhat more than what is barely neceſſary. I muſt therefore either hoard up the remainder ſolely for future poſſible contingencies, or I muſt employ it at preſent to the benefit of my fellow-creatures. That I ſhould endeavour to lay by a part of it, in order to ſecure myſelf or others againſt want and penury, in caſe I ſhould at ſome time or other be deprived of the means of gaining a livelihood, is perfectly conſiſtent with prudence. But for this no very great matter is neceſſary, if I conſider how improbable it is that I ſhould paſs a large portion of my life in this ſtate of impotence and infirmity. No wiſe man acts upon what is ſimply poſſible, but upon what is probable. It is abſolutely poſſible that I may ſome time hence have occaſion for the whole of my property, but it is extremely probable that it will not happen. Should I act upon that poſſibility, I ſhall let my whole ſtock of wealth lie unemployed, I ſhall act as though I had it not; thus it is in all likelihood loſt to me both for the preſent and for ever. Whereas, if I act upon this probability, I ſhall employ it to the relief of the poor, in feeding the hungry, in cloathing the naked, in comforting the ſick and diſtreſſed, in promoting the ſpiritual and corporeal happineſs of my brethren, thus I ſhall at the ſame time promote my own perfection, thus I ſhall exerciſe myſelf in beneficent

neficent affections, thus I ſhall procure myſelf various kinds of the pureſt and nobleſt ſatisfactions, thus I ſhall ſecure to myſelf the good pleaſure of my creator, who beſtowed theſe poſſeſſions upon me, and who beſtowed them on me unqueſtionably for important purpoſes, and thus I cannot certainly be a loſer by them, thus I muſt certainly be greatly the gainer. And would not this be the wiſeſt, the beſt uſe that I can make of my riches? Would not this uſe alone confer upon them a real value? Riches, my friends, are in fact only ſo far deſirable as they are actually uſeful to ourſelves and others, only ſo far as they conduce to the advancement of our perfection and the happineſs of our brethren, and whoever has learnt thus to appreciate them, will infallibly ſeek his greateſt ſatisfaction in beneficence, in the moſt induſtrious and unabating beneficence.

Would you farther exerciſe yourſelves in the virtue of beneficence, render it an eaſy and agreeable duty, and never be weary in the practice of it, learn duly to appreciate its objects. Learn to diſcriminate the man from the title that he bears, from the poſt and the rank which he occupies in ſociety, from the ſumptuous or mean cloaths that cover him, from the cottage or the palace which he inhabits, and to conſider him as he is in himſelf. Title, ſtation, rank, apparel ſurely do not conſtitute the worth of the man. They are externals, ſubject to numberleſs viciſſitudes, which may now

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be thus and now otherwiſe, without cauſing any alteration in the man, without his ceaſing to be that which he really is, without his loſing or gaining any thing thereby in reſpect to his nature and intrinſic worth. Suppoſe, that the foremoſt, the richeſt, the mightieſt of you, my pious hearers, ſhould by ſome particular reverſe of fortune, be deprived of his diſtinctions, his riches, his authority, that, though at preſent known and reſpected by ſo many, he ſhould ſink into oblivion, and live in the utmoſt obſcurity, that he ſhould be forced to exchange his ſumptuous dreſs for tattered garments, and his commodious and elegantly furniſhed houſe for an humble and cheerleſs tenement, would he therefore ceaſe to be the man which he now is? Would he therefore loſe his eſſential quality and his intrinſic worth? No, his outward condition, his relations towards the body corporate, would be altered by it, but he himſelf would continue the ſame, continue to be a rational, immortal being, a wiſe or unwiſe, good or bad, more or leſs perfect creature. If, my dear friends, ye learn in this manner to ſeparate the man from externals, and to treat and value him as man, you will feel much more ſenſibly a ſtrict relationſhip even with the lowlieſt among them, and not be aſhamed to own it. You will pay them a proper reſpect though they appear to you in the moſt uncomely form and accompanied by penury and wretchedneſs, even as God reſpects them, who created them as well as you, and has deſigned them alike for happineſs,

pineſs. You will therefore no longer conceive yourſelves to be exalted above them, as though ye were beings of a different, a nobler ſpecies, and not allow pride to harden your heart againſt them, ye will rather open it to the ſentiments of commiſeration and benevolence towards them, and thus be led in a manner to divide your external advantages with them. Ye will ſay to yourſelves: Theſe poor, theſe wretched, theſe abject beings who are apparently ſo far beneath me, and with whom I might be led to imagine I had but few things in common, are yet in fact exactly what I am. They perfectly reſemble me in all that properly conſtitutes the man, and confers on him any real worth. If I ſtrip both myſelf and them of what ſtrikes the eye, but is no part of us, there is no difference between us in any one eſſential point. Their bodies, which are juſt as artificially conſtructed as mine, are like my body inhabited by a rational, immortal ſpirit, ordained here to exerciſe its capacities and powers, and henceforth with my ſpirit to proceed from one ſtep of perfection to another. They belong as well as myſelf to the great family, which God our univerſal father, deſigns here on earth to educate and qualify for a ſuperior ſtate. They are therefore in reality my brothers and ſiſters in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the expreſſion, let their outward circumſtances be what they may. And ſhall I diſown creatures who in all eſſentials reſemble me, who are ſo near akin to me, who are deſignated to the ſame perfection and happineſs

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that I ſee before me? Shall I take no part in their pains, in their tears, in their diſtreſs? Shall I not fly to mitigate their pains, to wipe away their tears, to reſcue them from their diſtreſs, if I have the means for ſo doing? Shall I not freely help them to remove the obſtructions they may meet with in their endeavours after perfection and happineſs, if I am able to do it? Shall I live in plenty, and leave my brothers and ſiſters to ſtarve? Should I hold them to be what they are, if I acted in this manner? Should I not act in direct oppoſition to wiſdom, to the nature and due courſe of things, and therefore to the will of my creator and father, were I to be guilty of ſuch prepoſterous behaviour?

To be brief, would you learn to practiſe the virtue of beneficence in its full extent, and never be weary in the practice of it, ſtudy to form a juſt eſtimate of the preſent life, get the habit of conſidering it as connected with the future. But for that connection this life indeed is a very poor piece of buſineſs, now a ridiculous, now a mournful ſcene of folly and wretchedneſs of various kinds; a confuſed drama of motley characters, all in a great buſtle, doing nothing, accompliſhing nothing, in ſhort, an enigma which we cannot unravel. But in its connection with the future, this life is of the utmoſt importance, we diſcover its real plot and cataſtrophe, we ſee that it is intended as a ſchool of wiſdom and virtue, and that, as we lately ſhewed you, our future, everlaſting deſtiny depends on the good or ill uſe we

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make of the years of nurture and diſcipline we have here to paſs. If however it have ſuch a conjunction with our preſent life, what is our principal buſineſs in it? What ſhould be our chief and final aim, the ultimate ſcope of our endeavours and actions? Should it be external, tranſitory objects, which we cannot carry with us into the tomb and into eternity, or ſhould it be the perfection of our ſpirit, which is not like it obnoxious to termination or decay? But does not the perfection of our ſpirit conſiſt in juſtly reaſoning and acting, in regarding and treating the objects around us agreeably to their nature and quality, in favouring therefore this happineſs in all our fellow-creatures, who are ſuſceptible of it, and promoting it on all occaſions, or in wiſhing them well, and doing them good as much as in us lies? Certainly, a pure and active benevolence is eſſential to the perfection of a rational ſpirit. The ſupreme degree of the pureſt and moſt active benevolence is doubtleſs the diſtinctive character of God, the creator and father of ſpirits. The more therefore we here on earth fortify theſe ſentiments within us, the more induſtrious and indefatigable we are in beneficence, we proportionately advance our perfection, we more nearly approach the deity, we become the more capable and worthy of being tranſlated hereafter into a ſuperior ſtate; while on the contrary, an obdurate, unmerciful, ſelfiſh diſpoſition would totally diſqualify us for entering into connection with beings who are animated by a pure

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and active benevolence, or for partaking in their occupations and pleaſures. Yes, my friends, every truly beneficent ſentiment and action is attended by bleſſed conſequences to all eternity. The act itſelf is evaneſcent, may quickly be forgotten by ourſelves and others, even the good effects it produces without us are tranſient, as every thing ſenſible is, but the influence it has on our perfection and happineſs continues for ever. God has aſſigned to beneficent diſpoſitions and actions peculiar recompenſes in the world to come. We have every reaſon to expect them from his abundant kindneſs. But can we conceive a greater, a nobler reward, than that confirmation in virtue, that progreſs in perfection, than the ſoothing remembrance of the good we have done, than the capacities we have thereby acquired of doing thenceforward far more good? Surely theſe advantages will render us eminently happy even now before the arrival of that day of judgment and retribution which we expect, they will cheer us in the ſilent tomb, in the ſtate of departed ſpirits, into which we may be ſo ſoon, into which we may be to-day or to-morrow removed. The purer and more virtuous the diſpoſitions we carry with us into that ſtate, the greater number of beneficent, generous, noble actions we ſhall there be able to recollect, the greater muſt be our ſatisfaction and happineſs in it. Thus will every tear that we have wiped from the face of the mourner, every diſtreſs of the wretched that we have alleviated, every aſſiſtance that

that we have afforded the needy, thus will every act whereby we have ſhed light and conſolation and joy around us, inaſmuch as it was all done by us with an honeſt chriſtian heart, nouriſh and enhance our ſatisfaction and delight till that laſt day arrive, and then diſcloſe to us new founts of pleaſure and joy. Oh, my friends, who would not eagerly do good to the utmoſt of his power, who would not in earneſt become continually more induſtrious and alert in doing good, if he have once learnt duly to eſtimate his preſent life, and always to view it in its connection with the future?

Let ſuch be your encouragements, my devout hearers, to exerciſe yourſelves continually more and more in the virtue of beneficence, and never to be weary in well-doing. I know that many of you do much good, and I hope that none of you entirely neglect their duty in this particular. But even the beſt ſhould be encouraged, and the dilatory and negligent require to be repeatedly rouſed, that the former may not be diſheartened, and that the latter may quicken their diligence. Strive with renovated ardour for the prize of chriſtian perfection. Sow plentifully, that ye may reap alſo plentifully. Sow not to the fleſh, expend your temporal property not in the gratification of ſenſual appetites, on ſhort-lived follies and inanities. Thus would you abſolutely and for ever loſe it. Sow to the ſpirit, employ your temporal property in works of beneficence, in the practice of virtue, in the promotion

of good. Not only the good works we have done, and the rewards attending them, will follow us into the world of ſpirits, but the good principles we have learnt, the good habits we have formed, the generous and benevolent affections we have nouriſhed and cultivated, will ſtill make a part of our character, will accompany us into happier ſcenes, and ſtill find them uſe and exerciſe. Thus will ye take your poſſeſſions with you into the future world, thus will ye reap from them an everlaſting life, a happineſs incapable of diminution or decay. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

Examination of ſome of the uſual Pretences for being diſpirited in Beneficence.

GOD, who art doing good from everlaſting to everlaſting, and findeſt thy ſupreme felicity in thy immenſe benignity. Us, thy children, thou haſt likewiſe formed for kindneſs, made capable of beneficence, and wouldſt that we ſhould as it were partake with thee in this divine employment, this divine felicity. Never doſt thou let us want for opportunities, for incentives, for means of doing good; thou giveſt us goods of various kinds and in abundant meaſure, that we alſo may give to others; ſtrengtheneſt us, that we may be able to ſupport the weaker, — helpeſt and bleſſeſt us, that we may again help others, and be in a condition to bleſs them. And thus ſhould we all mutually give and receive, accept and enjoy life and conſolation and relief and ſatisfaction, and in this general commutation of kind offices, of benefits and gratitude, of love and returns of love, be happy! And that ſhould we moſt aſſuredly be, be ſo in an eminent degree, if we always followed thy will and acted agreeably to the true ends of our being! Oh let us however to-

day and every day of our lives, acknowledge this truth from thorough conviction, and let that acknowledgement become lively and efficacious within us from day to day. May our duty, o God, the duty of beneficence be at once our joy and felicity! May an inward, hearty deſire to be ſufficiently thankful, and a ſincere love to thee, our ſupreme, moſt liberal, unwearied benefactor, ever be a ruling principle in us all, impelling us conſtantly to the imitation of thee, and never ſuffering us to be diſpirited and weary in doing good to our brethren! Bleſs then to the promotion of theſe ends thoſe doctrines of truth, in the conſideration whereof we are now to be employed. Let their efficacy be impaired by no prejudices or paſſions, and the good impreſſion they make on us be indelible for ever! For theſe benefits we pray thee in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and in firm unſhaken reliance on his promiſes, thus farther addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

GALAT. vi. 9.

Let us not be weary in well-doing.

BENEFICENCE, my devout auditors, beneficence is in ſome degree natural to all mankind. When no unruly, ſelfiſh paſſion agitates the breaſt of man, obſcures and deludes his underſtanding, when man is properly himſelf, he is prompt to give, willing

ing to communicate, ready to aſſiſt. He knows, he feels how bliſsful it is to give and to communicate, and how reviving aſſiſtance is to the helpleſs, ſupport to the weak, comfort to the wretched. He has already received much himſelf from others, is daily receiving from them much, is always dependent on all, and can eaſily put himſelf in the predicament of thoſe whom he now intends to ſuccour and relieve. Perhaps himſelf, perhaps his family may come to want the ſame relief, the ſame aſſiſtance, and how lamentable would it be to him, were he or they to be denied it. While man can reaſon thus and draw ſuch inferences, he will never be indifferent to foreign diſtreſs. His heart will ſpontaneouſly open to compaſſion and his hand to beneficence. And then if religion, if chriſtianity be of ſerious concern to him; if he worſhip the deity as the God of mercy and love, is deeply ſenſible to the worth of his bounties, and cannot tell how ſubſtantially to ſhew his gratitude to him; if he be actuated by the mind and ſpirit of Jeſus, who conſtantly went about doing good, and knows no higher honour, no greater happineſs than that of becoming in thought and deed continually more like that benefactor of mankind, and thereby the more capable of his patronage and protection: oh how ſtrong the motives he will then find within to the moſt liberal beneficence, to the moſt magnanimous inſtances of bounty, how irreſiſtible to him will then be the ſight of every neceſſitous brother, every indigent child of his hea-

venly father! Neither nature however, nor religion, act upon us at all times with equal force. There are but too many moments of life, when we but faintly and indiſtinctly hear their voice, when buſineſs and diſtractions divert our attention from it, or when ſome ſecret paſſion either deceives our ears or drowns that voice by its clamorous demands. Even good, heavenly minded perſons may become languid and weary in well-doing, and frequently are ſo. Doing good indeed always remains to them a ſacred duty, a bleſſed occupation, they cannot long and never entirely forego that pleaſure which it yields them, and the ſatisfaction that it procures to their heart; but by a variety of ſpecious objections alleged againſt it by their acquaintance or their own ſelf-love they are ſometimes reſtrained in their ardour for doing good, and contract the effects of it more than they otherwiſe would. May it be granted me to-day, my pious hearers, to guard you againſt the baleful influence of any ſuch objections, and the oftener we incite you to beneficence, and the more opportunities that are afforded you for it, the leſs will ſuch conſiderations appear to be unneceſſary. We will therefore examine ſome of the pretences under which we are apt to ſhelter our languor in doing good. Pretences, which not unfrequently diſturb and perplex the well-diſpoſed, but much oftener cloſe the heart and the hand of the ſelfiſh, the narrow-minded man to beneficence and compaſſion. We ſhall at preſent confine ourſelves to four

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of theſe pretences, which we have indeed already examined on former occaſions, but only as it were by the way, and will now more expreſsly proceed to try. The refutation of theſe pretences will add new force to the exhortation of the apoſtle in our text: Let us not be weary in well-doing.

Firſt, it is often, too often ſaid, Beneficence is duty, is felicity, but the occaſions for it are ſurely too numerous and too various, they recur too frequently, under too great a variety of forms. No ſooner do we think we have performed our duty, but immediately ſome other occaſion preſents itſelf, a freſh ſummons to the diſcharge of it. At one time it is poor relations, at another poor countrymen, now natives, then foreigners, now the ſick who are in want of proper phyſic and nurſing, then the healthy, who are deſtitute of food and raiment, or the means of getting on in the world, now children, who are running about without nurture and diſcipline, then fathers and mothers of a family perſecuted by difficulties in gaining a precarious ſubſiſtence, now travellers unable any farther to purſue their journey, then unſucceſsful artiſts, mechanics, tradeſmen, decayed gentry, at once oppreſſed by the weighty hand of poverty and the burden of their quality, now private individuals, then whole ſocieties and communities, that apply to us for aid and ſupport. Who can aſſiſt and relieve all? Who would not at laſt be weary of giving? Should not one ſuppoſe that we were ſent into the world only for

the ſake of theſe wretches, that we had nothing to do but to liſten to their complaints and relieve their neceſſities? If thou talkeſt thus in ſome moment of ſpleen and ill-humour, o man, it is pardonable, it is not always an avoidable infirmity. If thou art occaſionally urged to think or ſpeak in this manner, by the multiplicity of affairs that croud upon thy mind, it is no more than an unbecoming expreſſion of that impatience which is but too natural to mankind; but if it be thy uſual, thy ordinary language, it certainly does no honour to thy heart. It is not the language of the benevolent, the charitable chriſtian; not the language of the man, who like his lord ſought and found his felicity in giving, in communicating, in relieving! No, that language ſounds quite differently. That is the language of the ſincereſt participation in every want, every neceſſity, every pang, every adverſity of a brother, it is the language of the tendereſt concern, that we can do no more, not beſtow more largely, not relieve all, not make all happy. Canſt thou not be beneficent, art thou deficient in means and abilities for it; religion and chriſtianity require it not of thee, God himſelf will accept thy benevolence for beneficence, and recompenſe it accordingly. But if thou canſt do good, knoweſt what beneficence is, and then art grieved on account of the frequent occaſions for it, thou contradicteſt thyſelf, thou complaineſt of what thou ſhouldſt congratulate thyſelf upon. Wouldſt thou complain of the frequent recurrence, the conſtant

ſtant renewal of opportunities for ſocial ſatisfaction, for ſocial pleaſure? Wouldſt thou be ſo ſoon weary of enjoying the beauties of nature, the comforts of domeſtic, the charms of ſocial life, the amuſements proper to every ſtation, to each revolving ſeaſon? Sayſt thou likewiſe, when thou art invited to ſuch amuſements, in a moroſe and ſurly humour: Who can enjoy all that is agreeable and convenient! Who can take part in every ſatisfaction, in every pleaſure? And is not then beneficence a ſatisfaction, a pleaſure; the nobleſt ſatisfaction, the pureſt pleaſure? Is it not a ſatisfaction conſtantly abiding, in the recollection as in the act, a pleaſure embittered by no remorſe, no ſelf-reproaches, which we may own with complacency before God and ourſelves, in the hours of ſerious reflection as in thoſe of feſtivity, in death as in life? Art thou unacquainted with theſe kinds of ſatisfaction and pleaſure, oh ſtudy to underſtand them, taſte them, do good to others, do ſo frequently and plenteouſly, do ſo at firſt from principle, from duty, ſoon wilt thou practiſe it from inclination and with a reliſh for it, and at length thou wilt find this ſatisfaction, this pleaſure become ſo neceſſary to thee, will be ſo much the general bent and purpoſe of thy ſoul, that thou canſt no longer diſpenſe with it, never enjoy it too often.

And then, my chriſtian brother, if thou art truly and earneſtly ſollicitous to obtain the complacency of God, thy heavenly father, wilt thou ever complain

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that his providence grants thee too many opportunities of teſtifying thy obedience, thy love, thy gratitude to him, thy affiance in him, and thy affection for his children whom he commends to thy care and relief, to perform for them what thou canſt not for him, thy benefactor and father? And if, as a chriſtian, thou haſt Jeſus continually in view, endeavoureſt to form thyſelf entirely upon him, and as much as poſſile to ſupply his place on earth, wilt thou ever lament that thou haſt too many occaſions and citations to emulate him, to become like him, and to do that which he aſſuredly would do, were he in thy place? No, my dear friends, let us never repine at the frequent opportunities of doing good and of being helpful to our brethren: let us much rather be glad of them, and cheerfully employ them as long as we have the means for ſo doing. We know not how often they may recur to us, how long we have to enjoy the pleaſure of beneficence, how quickly death or other circumſtances may deprive us of it! No, while wehave time let us be doing good.

It is however frequently farther alleged, In theſe hard times it is become ſo difficult for me to acquire any property, and ſtill more difficult to lay by and to accumulate; and then what ſhall I get by all my pains and toil, if I give it away to others, who perhaps in the mean time have been doing nothing, or however have not laboured half ſo much as I, and who are now gathering where they did not ſtrew, and reaping where they have not ſown? What thou

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ſhalt get by it, my chriſtian brother, if thou art diligent and induſtrious in the affairs of thy calling, and at the ſame time art ever ready to aſſiſt and glad to diſtribute? Ah, canſt thou in earneſt propoſe this queſtion? Canſt thou really think, that thou liveſt and workeſt and laboureſt ſolely for thyſelf, and that all the fruits of thy toil which thou doſt not conſume, are loſt? What a vulgar, what a ſelfiſh, what an unchriſtian way of thinking; how little muſt thou know of the deſigns of God in the preſent conſtitution of things! Haſt thou not yet been taught by information and reflection and experience, that labour already as labour, induſtry as induſtry, without regard to their outward effects, are extremely neceſſary and advantageous to thee? Knoweſt thou not, that they are the beſt preſervatives againſt the preſſure of irkſomneſs and languor, and from a thouſand follies? That he alone can be truly ſaid to live and to rejoice in exiſtence, who leads an active, a buſy life, and operates far around him? That every work thou executeſt with intelligence and conſideration, every buſineſs thou prudently tranſacteſt, exerciſes, ſtrengthens, evolves thy mental faculties, capacitates them for ſuperior, greater affairs, and therefore brings thee nearer to thy perfection? And that thou frequently comeſt the nearer to this perfection, and exerciſeſt the more thy mental faculties and with greater ſucceſs, the more difficulties thou haſt to conquer in thy works and affairs, the more arduous the taſk of acquiring a com-

a competence is become? Knoweſt thou not, that to every honourable and conſcientious employment of our powers, to every labour that is not abſolutely in vain, to the completion of every not totally unimportant tranſaction, pleaſure and ſatisfaction are attached; far greater pleaſure, far more real ſatisfaction, than to the enjoyment of any extraneous advantages or profit that we may have acquired from it? And is all this nothing? Doſt thou not therefore always work primarily and principally for thyſelf? Is not always the greateſt, the principal, the only abiding profit thou gaineſt by thy labour, thine? Does it not even then remain, when thou thyſelf enjoyeſt only the leaſt portion of the gain thou haſt thus acquired, and relinquiſheſt the reſt to others, who have contributed nothing to the acquirement of it? And whence in ſhort haſt thou more, which is the ſweeter, the nobler remuneration of thy labour and toil; the unemployed accumulation of the fruits of it, or the diſperſion of it, here in relieving ſome poor, there ſome wretched being, here in comforting ſome drooping ſoul, there in delivering one in trouble from his diſtreſſes, here in preventing the commiſſion of a crime which perhaps would have begotten a hundred, a thouſand other crimes, in long ſucceſſion to a late period of time, there in encouraging a virtue which may occaſion and produce as many other virtues, here in ſupporting ſome good inſtitution, and thus enſuring its duration and its influence for ages to come, there in refreſhing a whole

numerous ſociety of people, thy brethren, who without thy aid would be leſs free and leſs happy? Does our property retain the leaſt real value, when we merely have it, merely keep and amaſs it, but make no uſe of it? Is it not in this caſe juſt as much as if we had it not? Do we not on the other hand lay it out to uſury, do we not enjoy it in the worthieſt manner, do we not amaſs treaſures for the future world, by employing it in beneficence, in unwearied beneficence? No, be aſſured that no pains, no labour is in vain, even though we ſeem to be working more for others than for ourſelves; no benefits that we confer on others are loſt, not loſt even to us; here they reward us with pleaſure and hereafter with felicity!

Yet ſome perhaps will ſay, and this is a third pretence, wherewith we are wont to excuſe our wearineſs in well-doing, How frequently have I already failed in the beſt, the moſt generous purpoſes I had in it? How ſeldom have I had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing my benefactions properly applied? How many of the poor, how many of the wretched have abuſed the ſuccours that I afforded them, to idleneſs or even to intemperance! How often have I helped to ſupport inſtitutions, which afterwards proved not to be and not to yield, what I had a right to expect from them! How often, deceived by appearances, have I taken the guilty for innocent! How often have I had lies paſſed upon me for truth! Of the objects of diſtreſs that we meet with, how greatly the number

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of the worthleſs exceeds that of the deſerving!— And I, my chriſtian brother, might likewiſe ſay to thee: How much more falſe than true, how much more diſgraceful than honourable to thee are theſe complaints! How little are they conſiſtent with that inward, cordial charity, with that active zeal in doing good by which the chriſtian ſhould be inſpired! Cautious and prudent thou mayeſt, thou ſhouldſt be — but that anxious ſolicitude, that continual doubt, whether it be well or ill beſtowed, that exceſſive apprehenſion of doing too much, and the irreſolution and indolence reſulting from it, certainly ſhew more of a frigid, inſenſible, than of an affectionate heart, often betraying the ſecret wiſh to be exempted altogether from the duty of beneficence! — Would we aid and aſſiſt no one, do good to no one, my dear friends, without bieng previouſly ſure of the proper uſe he would make of our benefactions, oh then we ſhould grant but little aid to others, do them little good, ſince this certitude we can but rarely have! By parity of reaſon the huſbandman would only need to ſow and plant ſparingly, were he previouſly certified, that what he ſows and plants will thrive and bear the beſt fruit! So ſhould we ourſelves have need only to undertake little, to begin little, were we firſt to be ſure, that we could undertake nothing better, that our undertakings would ſucceed, and that we ſhould infallibly accompliſh what we have begun! — — — And did we even know for certain, that the wretch, whom we relieve, has not

deſerved it either of us or of ſociety in general, is he therefore the leſs wretched, leſs needy? Is he not doubly wretched, if he be the cauſe of his own wretchedneſs? Even with all the relief that we may afford him, is he not ſufficiently amerced for his follies? May he not become ſtill more wretched, more wicked, more injurious to ſociety, if we refuſe him all relief! May he not from a ſimply uſeleſs being become a malefactor, an atrocious villain? — And even though he were undeſerving of any ſuccour, may not his wife, may not his children be worthy of it? May not other and better perſons, with whom he is connected, partake in the benefit that we do him, and make a better uſe of it? May he not in time become better himſelf?— — — The caſe is juſt the ſame with public inſtitutions, which we uphold without ſufficiently attending to their proceſs. Can we take a view of all the conſequences they have already produced in ſecret, and which they will in future produce? May they not give occaſion, even though they ſhould not themſelves be able to ſubſiſt, to other and better eſtabliſhments, which without the former would never have been ſet on foot? May not a good inſtitution continue long in a contracted, feeble, imperfect, defective ſtate, and yet at length become what it was originally intended to be, but what it could not be at firſt? Do not likewiſe great attempts merit encouragement, even though they ſhould afterwards fail of ſucceſs? Do we not thus contribute what we

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can to more ſucceſsful attempts in future? — — And then, my dear friends, does it well become us, to complain of undeſerving perſons and miſapplied benefactions, and to be ſo ſcrupulous on this point; we, who are daily, hourly receiving ſo many bounties from God, of which we are not deſerving; we who ſo frequently abuſe his moſt precious largeſſes, and ſo ſeldom make the beſt uſe of them, and yet are always requiring and actually obtaining freſh benefits, and of ſtill greater magnitude of him? Oh let us be as kindly diſpoſed to our brethren, as God is to us! Let us be merciful, even as our father in heaven is merciful! Let us ſhed like him our benevolence and our beneficence on the evil and on the good, on the juſt and on the unjuſt, and like him never be weary in doing good!

It is however, to conclude, alleged, and this is a fourth pretence under which we are apt to excuſe our laſſitude in doing good: But am I not unjuſt to my children and my poſterity by being ſo bountiful and liberal? Muſt I not be accountable to them for the application of my property as an eſtate held in truſt? Is it not even at preſent their lawful inheritance? May they not juſtly reproach me ſometime hence for having miſapplied a part, a conſiderable part of it to other purpoſes? No, that they cannot and ought not to do, my chriſtian friend, for thy eſtate, particularly that part which thou haſt thyſelf acquired, is no more their property than it is the property of an alien. An eſtate in truſt it certainly

tainly is, though not entruſted to thee by thy children, but by God and by ſociety, and not to thy children, but to God and to ſociety muſt thou be accountable for it. The opinion, my pious hearers, that by liberal beneficence we wrong our children and relatives, is one of the moſt pernicious and vulgar of prejudices. It would be generally pernicious to moſt children themſelves, nay, it would be an unfortunate circumſtance for them, to be rich while children, or while young folks, and to know that they are ſo. This is a matter which daily experience places beyond every doubt. Run through all claſſes and ranks of ſociety, collect in your mind all the uſeleſs, unprofitable, peſtilential, vicious perſons, all the wretched, ſickly, weak, diſcontented, ſullen, moroſe, melancholy perſons around you, and you will find moſt of them, eſpecially in great towns and among the upper ranks, to have been children of wealthy parents, who, becauſe they were rich, have learnt nothing thoroughly, have not properly exerciſed and unfolded their capacities and powers, who have been cockered and ſpoilt in their infancy, inured to no hardſhip, ſtrangers to croſſes and diſappointments, and at firſt were addicted to vanity, to wantonneſs, to idleneſs, afterwards enſnared by vice, and at length are become peeviſh, gloomy, ſullen, churliſh and miſerable. How baneful then muſt this prejudice be to human ſociety at large! How many might and would have afforded far more

relief to the poor and wretched, far more ſubſtantial ſupport to beneficial inſtitutions, ſalutary reforms, important attempts in ameliorating the condition of the lower claſſes, in arts and ſciences, in eſtabliſhing ſchools and ſeminaries of wholeſome inſtruction, if they had not been checked by the futile dread of wronging their children by it, or of ſeeing them leſs opulent! Baniſh theſe idle fears, my chriſtian friend, if thou wouldſt diſcharge thy duty as a man, as a member of ſociety, as a chriſtian. Let them never obſtruct thee in acts of beneficence. No, education, a truly diſcreet, ſound education thou oweſt to thy children, this they have a right to demand of thee, and nothing beſides! Educate them therefore as carefully, as conſcientiouſly as ever thou canſt, ſpare in this reſpect neither pains nor expenſe, and if thou ſhouldſt be obliged to beſtow upon it all that thou canſt ſcrape together, beſtow it freely. Teach them principally to love both God and man, to underſtand their preſent and future appointment, and to ſeek their ſatisfaction and happineſs not without them, but within; teach them to reſtrain and to govern their appetites, to moderate their expenſes, to contract their wants, and to act more upon juſt and fixt principles than from popular opinions; inſtill into them right notions of honour and ſhame, of miſery and happineſs; inſpire them with a ruling affection for moderation, for order and regularity, for diligence and induſtry, for a buſy, retired and uſeful life, and cultivate in them an habitual

bitual taſte for theſe things: ſo wilt thou aſſuredly, better than by any other means, ſecure them againſt pinching poverty and real miſery; ſo mayſt thou be eaſy and unconcerned about their future ſucceſs in the world, whether thou bequeath them little or much. Thou leaveſt them at leaſt unimpaired faculties, juſt perceptions, good diſpoſitions and habitudes, the love of God and their fellow-creatures, all the capacities and means to be truly happy, and for becoming ever happier! And is not that of infinitely more value than the greateſt riches?

Thus falſe and ungrounded, my pious hearers, are the pretences, under which we are wont to endeavour at excuſing our languor and remiſſneſs in doing good! Never allow yourſelves to be impoſed upon by them, my dear friends. Let them never prevent you from being liberal and bountiful, that ye may here enjoy the felicity of beneficence in full meaſure, and hereafter reap everlaſting advantages from it. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

The natural Equality of Mankind.

GOD, thou art the creator and father of us all, thou knoweſt and loveſt us all, thou careſt for us all. Thou haſt raiſed us all to the rank of thy children, to the rank of rational immortal beings. Thou wouldſt render us all perfectly and everlaſtingly happy, the poor as well as the rich, the deſpiſed as well as the reſpected and honoured. Thy pure intellect no borrowed luſtre can deceive. From thee the moſt ſecret virtues are not concealed. Thou ſeeſt and judgeſt us as we are in ourſelves, and with thee is no reſpect of perſons. Neither high nor low, neither rich nor poor, may boaſt as ſuch of thy diſtinguiſhed favour; but all the upright and ſincere, all who heartily love thee and their neighbour, are agreeable in thy ſight, are happy in thee, and may expect from thee nought but good both in the preſent and the future world. Though thou diſtributeſt outward diſtinctions, temporal goods in various proportions among mankind, yet thou leaveſt none deficient in means and opportunities for attaining the end for which

which thou haſt placed them on this terreſtrial globe. Thou requireſt of us nothing more than fidelity, and that fidelity thou wilt hereafter crown with the moſt glorious rewards. Oh may we be always ſenſible to our dignity and the grandeur of our deſtination, may we never be dazzled by extrinſic, accidental and tranſitory diſtinctions, never by the poſſeſſion of them be ſeduced to pride, nor by the want of them to diſcontent. Teach us rather to recogniſe our natural equality, and grant that we may conſtantly be ſo diſpoſed and may ſo behave towards each other, as becomes the children of one father and heirs of the ſame felicity. Bleſs to this effect the meditations to which we ſhall devote the preſent moments. Let them increaſe our knowledge and confirm us in virtue and contentment. We pray thee for theſe mercies in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and in perfect reliance on his promiſes addreſs thee farther, ſaying, Our father, &c.

ACTS xvii. 26.

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

IF we conſider the capacities, the ſtation, the goods of fortune, the pleaſures and contingencies that fall to the lot of mankind, they are unqueſtionably very unequal in all theſe reſpects, and the interval between the mightieſt and the meaneſt, the richeſt

and the pooreſt, the moſt learned and the moſt ignorant, the moſt proſperous and the moſt unfortunate, appears to be extremely great. But however great this inequality may be, it is nevertheleſs upon the whole productive of far more good than harm. It is grounded in the nature of things, it is a neceſſary and inevitable reſult of the ſtate in which the creator has placed us on the earth, and muſt be ſubſervient to the wiſeſt and kindeſt purpoſes. It links the ſeveral members of human ſociety the more cloſely together, inaſmuch as the one is in want of another and is dependent on him; it awakens and augments every ſpecies of life and activity among them; it furniſhes them with the ſtrongeſt motives and the moſt diverſified opportunities to exert their various faculties and endowments, to exert them with the moſt intenſe and unremitted ardour, to apply them to the general welfare and to exerciſe themſelves in all the virtues; and in ſo doing they multiply their pleaſures and refine their taſte. Even the abuſe that is made of authority, of riches, of mental vigour and other advantages, muſt under the ſuperintendance of the ſovereign ruler of the univerſe conduce to the more general expanſion of the human capacities, and therefore to the greater perfection of the whole. — In the mean time we frequently conceive the inequality that obtains among mankind to be much greater than in fact it is, and this erroneous conception gives birth to many baneful effects. One man it puffs up with arrogance and conceit, another it dejects and immerges

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in deſpondence. The former it renders haughty and cruel; the latter heartleſs and cringing. The powerful and the wealthy it perſuades to think themſelves of more conſequence than they are; the poor and mean it induces to ſet a lower value on themſelves than they have any reaſon to do. From both it conceals the true relative ſituations in which they ſtand together, and prevents them from behaving to each other as theſe relative ſituations demand. This falſe and exaggerated conception of the inequality of mankind actually removes them ever farther aſunder, and inſpires them with ſentiments that are extremely prejudicial to their mutual happineſs. It is therefore needful and expedient, my devout audience, for us to conſider mankind not on one ſide only, but alſo on thoſe which ſhew them to be more alike, and that in regard to their inequality we ſhould learn to diſtinguiſh the eſſential from the fortuitous, reality from ſemblance. This, my friends, is the ſcope of the meditations which I deſign now to enter upon with you. The apoſtle ſays in our text that God has cauſed all mankind to ſpring from one blood, thereby reminding us of their common origin and their near relationſhip, the neareſt of all, that of conſanguinity. We will now extend our reflections to the reſt of what they have in common together, by repreſenting to you in general the equality of mankind. We remark it principally in four particulars: in their nature; in their deſtination; in their ſorrows; in their joys.

The equality of their nature is manifeſt and undeniable. An organized body, animated by a rational ſpirit, is what conſtitutes man, and what all without exception have in common. Whatever variations may be in the outward make of the body and the natural or acquired capacities and faculties of the mind, they are eſſentially in every man the ſame.—The body of the vileſt ſlave is equally admirable in the ſtructure of its limbs, in the deſtination, the uſes and the connection of its ſeveral members and parts, as the body of the mightieſt among the princes of the earth. The former bears upon it no fewer marks of the wiſdom and goodneſs of the creator, than the latter. Health, beauty, ſtrength, agility, theſe precious gifts of nature, are not diſtributed according to the ſtation which the individual holds in ſociety. They are goods that devolve on man as ſuch, goods diſpenſed by providence without diſtinction of rank and fortune among all claſſes and conditions of men, as it pleaſes God; and by theſe goods the poor and mean are very often indemnified for the more ſhining though far leſs ſolid advantages of the rich and great. — And the ſoul, my friends, the ſoul that reſides and acts within us, that nobleſt part of ourſelf, is that not as eſſential to one individual as to another? Does it not conſtitute all of them children of God, creatures that are formed in the image of their creator? Does it not elevate them all far above the inanimate and brute creation? Does it not give them an affi-

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nity with angels and ſuperior ſpirits? Are not its moſt excellent capacities and energies common to all? — I am well aware, that all human ſouls do not here below attain to the ſame degree of perfection. But does this difference abſolutely depend on the diverſity of ſtation and fortune? Is a ſound underſtanding, a right judgment, ſtrength of mind, ſelf-command, controul of the paſſions always found in company with elevated rank, with opulence, with power? Are the poor, the lower ſort, uniformly, are they commonly deſtitute of theſe ſuperior endowments? Are they not far more frequently wanting in opportunity than in abilities for diſtinguiſhing themſelves advantageouſly beyond others, and for humbling the pride of the great by the moſt liberal ſentiments, the moſt generous actions, the moſt excellent attainments? — The variety and difference of the capacities and endowments of the human mind, we mean not however to deny. We are very ready to admit the influence that rank and fortune have upon the formation and expanſion of them. But is then the inequality thence originating between human minds, ſo great, ſo conſiderable as it appears to be? Is not the apparent difference between the intellectual powers of man, rather in the adventitious method of producing and employing them, and in the particular occaſions that occur for it, than in what conſtitutes their nature and eſſence? Where is the man, who cannot with clear conſciouſneſs of himſelf feel and think, diſtinguiſh his

ſelf from that which he has felt and thought, and from his feelings and thoughts deduce various concluſions and rules of conduct, and does not this compoſe the diſtinctive characteriſtic of a rational human ſoul?- Beſides, are the capacities and endowments which are frequently moſt extolled, becauſe they are the moſt rare and conſpicuous, always in reality the moſt uſeful and valuable? — You have, for inſtance, the talent of wit, and you congratulate yourſelf upon it, becauſe by it you acquire admiration and applauſe. Another, whom you perhaps regard with pity or contempt, poſſeſſes not this gift, but he has a ſound underſtanding. And which of the two now is moſt valuable? Your wit ſparkles and ſhines, but it often leads you aſtray. It not unfrequently is diverting to yourſelf and others; but ſtill oftener it confuſes, affronts and exaſperates the honeſt and inoffenſive, and turns friends into foes. The other has indeed nothing ſhining and faſcinating in his ſound underſtanding, but a ſo much the ſafer light; a light that never forſakes him, and whoſe mild and ſteady ray is not only innoxious to himſelf and others, but extremely beneficial. — You have perhaps a profound philoſophical mind, not to be captivated by the outward figure of objects, not ſatisfied with knowing their ſurface and their apparent effects, but endeavours to explore their elementary principles, their conſtituent parts, their why and their wherefore. Another has ſimply a good judgment, common ſenſe, a natural, lively

lively perception of whatever in reſpect to him is true or falſe, good or bad. Which of the two will probably proceed with the greater ſafety in moſt of the tranſactions and affairs of life? Which will, generally ſpeaking, reap the moſt pleaſure and profit from his method of conſidering and judging of objects? If your philoſophical penetration renders you diſtruſtful of your own feelings, and perhaps converts all that you ſee and hear and feel into a ſort of falſe lure, of ſpecious impoſture; if at every ſtep you are apprehenſive of error and deceit, and therefore ſometimes loſe ſight at once both of ſemblance and reality, of form and ſubſtance; the other, who does not examine ſo deeply, boldly follows what his ſenſes, his feelings, his experience tell him, and though he dives into the inward nature and quality of things as little as you do, though he knows ſtill leſs than you do what they eſſentially are, he knows however what they are in reſpect to him, underſtands their analogies with his welfare and that of others, and uſes and enjoys them with a tranquil mind, conformably to thoſe analogies. — You poſſeſs in ſhort perhaps ſeveral branches of knowledge, which you ſtyle grand and ſublime, and which in ſome reſpects really are ſo. You embrace in your capacious mind both heaven and earth, the intellectual and the material world, the viſible and the inviſible, and you are emboldened even to attempt the unfathomable abyſſes of deity. The huſbandman, the mechanic, it is true, has not this knowledge;

ledge; he even cannot have it. But does he regularly ſuffer any material privation on that account? May not the want of it ſometimes be even advantageous to him? Are the moſt neceſſary and ſalutary truths and points of knowledge very numerous or very difficult to acquire? Are they not level to the capacity of all mankind? And may not theſe truths be as valuable and even more to the huſbandman, to the mechanic, who underſtands them with perſpicuity, firmly believes and ſtedfaſtly follows them, than the moſt profound ſpeculations and the moſt ingenious hypotheſes can be to you? He follows the luminous truths, which he has once adopted as his guides, without dread or danger, while you, who perhaps will not truſt to this light, are miſguided by a meteor into various turnings and intricacies, and ſometimes led into labyrinths out of which you are unable to find your way. He experiences the wholeſome efficacy of the few, but important truths, which he knows and believes, they govern him in his conduct and conſole him in all adverſities, while you are often tormented by doubts and uncertainties, which ſhake the whole fabric of your wiſdom and ſcience to its very foundations, ſpread a cloud over the face of nature, and raviſh from you all the ſupports of conſolation and hope. No, my pious hearers, however manifold and even different the capacities and endowments of the human mind may be, however different the degree of its culture and the circuit of its knowledge: the

difference thence originating among mankind, is not nearly ſo great as at firſt ſight it appears. It has no relation to that which conſtitutes the man, to that which he abſolutely muſt know in order to be wiſe and happy; to the eſſential and neceſſary, but only to the accidental and ſuperfluous; and beſides, even in this particular, advantage and diſadvantage, profit and loſs, are ſo nicely balanced, that the inequality, which ſtartled us at firſt, on a juſter appretiation of the objects, almoſt entirely vaniſhes from our view. —Virtue alone, my friends, moral excellence forms likewiſe not indeed an eſſential, yet a very real and remarkable, difference among mankind. But this virtue, this moral excellence is by no means peculiar to one condition more than to another. It ſuits with all. It meets in every ſtate and condition of life, with its encouragements and its obſtacles. It takes its abode with high and low, with rich and poor, with the learned and the unlearned; and he is undoubtedly the moſt virtuous, who makes the beſt uſe of his great or ſmall, intelligence and abilities, and moſt worthily occupies the ſtation aſſigned him by providence, whether it be the higheſt or the loweſt.

This, my friends, leads me to the other particular wherein the equality of mankind is apparent. It is their deſtination. Noble and grand as it is, it is however common to all. They are all immortal, all deſigned for a perpetually progreſſive perfection and happineſs. The preſent life is to all a ſtate of diſcipline,

diſcipline, of exerciſe, of preparation for a better and more perfect life to come. It is true, that one perſon has more opportunity and ſtronger motive to the exertion of his mental powers, and to the promotion of his natural and moral perfection than another, and that one is more quickly and earlier ripe for a bleſſed immortality than another. But the paſſage from a merely ſenſual, animal, to a rational life is open to every one; is an object that is attained by all who do not die in their infancy; and this is however the principal and moſt general object of our preſent exiſtence. We all come into the world as creatures entirely ſenſual, differing in nothing except their outward form from the beaſts of the field, and we all depart this world as beings that have acquired a clear and diſtinct conſciouſneſs of themſelves and are become capable of thinking rationally. We advance therefore a very conſiderable ſtep farther on the ſcale of things, and on this ſtep both the learned and the unlearned remain till they are tranſlated into a ſuperior ſtate. The former underſtands better perhaps than the latter, how he aroſe to this degree of perfection, and how much this progreſs gives him to expect in future; that is the principal difference between them. — Beſides, no one is abſolutely deficient in means and opportunities for well huſbanding that which is entruſted to him in this ſeaſon of exerciſe and preparation, whether it be much or little, and for doing that which he has here to do according to his ſtation and calling, whether it be important or unim-

unimportant, with fidelity and care; and that fidelity is, however, the principal point on which the deciſion of our future lot will turn. We are all therefore appointed to the very ſame end and purpoſe, and may all reach it, however our outward circumſtances may otherwiſe differ.—Attend then to this, o thou, who liveſt in an upper ſtation, whoever thou art, from the opulent citizen to the prince, attend then to this: the ſoul of thy man-ſervant, of thy maid-ſervant, of thy vaſſal, thy ſlave, is formed to the ſame end and purpoſe, ſhe is as immortal as thy ſoul. She will partake with thee in the glorious portion which God has in futurity prepared for thee. She will as well as thou climb from one ſtage of perfection and happineſs to another, and if ſhe carry with her more integrity, more godly love and neighbourly love into eternity than thou, if ſhe here has filled her lowly ſtation more worthily than thou thy more exalted poſts, ſhe will likewiſe enjoy more happineſs and receive a greater recompenſe than thou. She will not indeed look down on thee with contempt, for by vanity and pride ſhe has never been governed, but thou wilt in a manner look up to her with reverence and remorſe and be aſhamed of thy folly in having formerly exalted thyſelf above her. In the future ſtate, my friends, every diſtinction that is not founded on probity and virtue, will vaniſh and no longer avail. No pre-eminence of birth or fortune will there be of any value. There the wicked potentate muſt yield precedence to his good ſubjects, the unjuſt maſter to his honeſt ſervants, the wealthy miſer to the beneficent

neficent labourer, the vicious ſcholar to the harmleſs unlettered peaſant. And thus will it no leſs manifeſtly than glorioufly appear, that what now conſtitutes the greateſt inequality among mankind, is in reality of little conſequence, when we look at their proper deſtination, and ſee the preſent and the future in their true connection.

Even here too their deſtinies in general are not ſo unequal as they appear to be. For convincing ourſelves of this, we will proceed, my pious hearers, to conſider thirdly the equality of mankind in a view to their ſufferings. Not as though each individual had the ſame or exactly as many and great evils and hardſhips to bear as another. The apparent difference in this reſpect is ſtriking and undeniable. But not leſs undeniable alſo it is, that the proportion and magnitude of theſe ſufferings is not determined by the ſtation or rank of the perſon, that they exiſt among all claſſes and conditions of men, among the higher as well as the lower in pretty equal allotments, and that the more or fewer afflictions and troubles peculiar to each are in general equally balanced. It is only from the want of reflection and experience that we can ſuppoſe the higher orders to have in this reſpect any great advantage over the inferior. Or, is perhaps the great, the rich, the powerful man exempt from all afflictions? Is he alone obnoxious to no weakneſſes, no infirmities, no untoward accidents? Are not moſt of the evils complained of by mankind, common to all ranks? Is the prince in the cradle ſtronger, more independent,

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liable to fewer wants, expoſed to fewer hazards, than the newborn babe of his vaſſal? Does the former learn to ſpeak, to walk, to think, to live with leſs difficulty than the latter? — Dwell trouble and grief, pain and ſickneſs only under thatched roofs? — Do they not as often, nay oftener, take up their reſidence in gorgeous palaces and elegantly furniſhed houſes? And whether of the two bears more eaſily pain and ſickneſs, he who is become tender and effeminate by eaſe and affluence, or he who by ruder habits of life has been enured to wants and hardſhips? Though the former has greater attendance; yet the latter can more eaſily do without it. The ſkill of the phyſician may frequently relieve and reſtore the former; the latter is perhaps ſtill oftener recovered by the inherent powers of nature always having full play, and acting in proper effect to his preſervation. — Whether is more perſecuted by doubts, by uncertainty, by cares and uneaſineſſes of various kinds, the learned or the illiterate man, the commander or the common ſoldier, the rich or the poor man, the maſter or the ſervant, the courtier or the day-labourer? — Which has the moſt obſtacles in his way to ſurmount, the moſt difficulties to contend with, the moſt frequently to lament over fruſtrated hopes, diſconcerted plans, abortive projects? The poor and mean, whoſe wants, deſires and occupations are ſo contracted, or the rich and great, whoſe neceſſaries are ſo numerous, whoſe wiſhes are ſo unbounded, whoſe undertakings are ſo extenſive, whoſe affairs are ſo com-

plicate and intangled? — Which is obliged to lay himſelf under moſt conſtraint, to deny himſelf more innocent amuſements, to be more anxiouſly attentive to his looks, geſtures, words and actions; the man of mean condition, who lives in a happy obſcurity, whom no one either obſerves or envies, and who may careleſsly follow his inclination, or the man of quality, who is held in particular reſpect, and whoſe failings or miſtakes envy and jealouſy are ever on the watch to detect? — Again, do not error, prejudice, paſſion, thoſe exuberant ſources of evil, prevail among all claſſes and orders of men? Do not intemperance, anger, hatred, malice, idleneſs, negligence, vanity, ill-humour, draw after them, wherever they appear, the ſame baleful effects, though under a ſomewhat different form? No, none can with impunity tranſgreſs the laws of wiſdom, of moderation, of regularity, of prudence; no one can blindly follow his lower animal appetites, without forfeiting his liberty and peace of mind, without ſinking into the harſheſt bondage. — Is not moreover the poſſeſſion of all worldly diſtinctions and property held by a precarious tenure? Is not every ſort of external welfare, firm and ſtationary as it may ſeem, ſubject to various revolutions and adverſe events, and muſt not theſe revolutions and events be the more grievous and diſtreſſing in proportion as a man's circumſtances were previouſly more ſplendid, as his loſs is the greater, and as his humiliation and fall excite greater attention and noiſe?

In ſhort, comes not death, at laſt, to carry off without diſtinction of rank and ſtation, now the high now the low, now the rich now the poor, from the land of the living, to mingle their duſt together in the boſom of the earth, and does he not appear to the imaginary minion of fortune commonly in a far more terrific form than to the unfortunate wretch, who welcomes him with open arms as his friend and deliverer? — Certainly, my pious hearers, in this reſpect too the balance is held perfectly even. Afflictions and adverſities are common to all men, becauſe they are needful and ſalutary to all. From them no ſtation is exempt. No ſtation on the whole is more haraſſed with them than another. Here are more afflictions of one kind; there are more afflictions of a different nature. Here they are more violent and of ſhorter duration; there more tolerable and more laſting. Here they are more frequent and numerous and leſs ſenſibly felt; there more rare and make deeper, more painful impreſſions. Here they break out in obſtreperous lamentations and floods of tears, there, where pride overpowers ſenſation, they are kept locked up within the breaſt accompanied with corroding grief.

The ſame equality, my pious hearers, is finally, likewiſe obſervable in regard to the pleaſure and happineſs of mankind. As in all ranks are to be found melancholy and unhappy perſons, ſo there are likewiſe in all ranks others who are pleaſed and happy, and it is no eaſy matter to decide whether, all things

conſidered, more pleaſure and happineſs ſubſiſt among the higher or among the lower claſſes of mankind. In order to be happy, my friends, great riches, ſplendid diſtinctions, various accommodations and amuſements, are by no means ſo requiſite as well-regulated affections, a cheerful, contented diſpoſition, and this frame of mind is not neceſſarily attached to any particular ſtation, to any one claſs of men. It is partly a boon of providence, not diſpenſed according to rank and dignity, and partly the reſult of a rational, upright carriage, which every man may obtain. It is not the multiplicity of the goods we poſſeſs, but their correſpondence with our wants and our wiſhes, that renders us happy or unhappy. If the great and rich man have ever ſo much, but not that which he wiſhes for or what he wants for the gratification of his pride and his avarice, he is unhappy; and if the poor and abject man have ever ſo little, but is content with what he has, he is happy. Happineſs has its ſeat within us and not without us, my friends. It depends far more on our temper and conduct than on the externals, that we have or have not. If we would properly aſcertain the extent and degree of it in perſons of different ranks and habits of life, we muſt by no means ſuffer ourſelves to be dazzled by appearances. They are entirely in favour of the higher orders of mankind, but they are extremely deceitful. — They unqueſtionably have their advantages; they have various means of pleaſure, which are denied to others. But can they

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always employ theſe means as they would wiſh? Do they find in the enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures, all that they had previouſly expected from it? Are they not often entirely ſpoilt by the refinement, oftener by the conſtraint that attends them? Does not the facility, with which they can procure them, deprive them of almoſt the whole of their value? Do they not generally become inſipid by the frequent repetition of them? Conſtant habit lowers even the moſt beautiful and charming objects to the claſs of the moſt ordinary things, and leaves the moſt exquiſite pleaſures of ſenſe no advantage over the moſt ſimple and natural. The opulent voluptuary often nauſeates the dainties on his loaded table, and the lordly owner of a magnificent palace walks through its ſplendid apartments, ornamented with the choiceſt works of art, with as much indifference and inſenſibility, as if it were a clay-built hut. — Pleaſure, my friends, is everywhere to be found, but it ſhews itſelf not everywhere in the ſame form. As the taſtes of men are various, various alſo are their pleaſures. One man ſeeks pleaſure in numerous, brilliant companies, another in the ſmall circle of his family and a few friends; one in noiſe, another in retirement; the former in ſprightly diſcourſe and trials of wit or ſagacity, the latter in familiar converſations on domeſtic affairs. If the former is charmed with the faſcinating power of muſic, the latter is delighted with the melodious warbling of birds. If the former entertains himſelf in contemplating the works of

art, the other is raviſhed with the magnificent ſcenes of nature. If the former is tranſported at the ſight of his riches, his treaſures of ſilver and gold, the latter rejoices no leſs in the bleſſing of a plentiful harveſt or vintage.—Children have their ſports, the populace have their diverſions, the wealthy citizen his paſtime, the courtier his feſtivities, the ſage his hours of recreation. We ſhould only not make our pleaſures always the ſtandard for the pleaſures of others. We ſhould only not imagine, that what appears inſipid, or indifferent, or even tireſome to us, muſt appear ſo to others. There is not leſs, frequently there is more mirth in the ſervants-hall than in the drawing-room, more joy at the harveſt-home of the village than at the ſumptuous banquets of the city or the court. The ruſtic has as much, frequently more reliſh for his coarſe fare, than the rich man has for his delicacies. Hunger ſeaſons the food of the former, and labour and pure air ſeldom allow him to want for digeſtion and ſound, refreſhing ſleep. Even the man of the loweſt condition is not incapable of the pureſt, nobleſt pleaſure, I mean the conſcioufneſs of acting juſtly, of loving mercy, and of walking humbly with his God. If the artificer, the ſervant, the day-labourer acts for the beſt according to his judgment, he may find in the faithful diſcharge of his duties the ſame ſatisfaction, that the ſcholar, the ſtateſman finds in the accompliſhment of his. — So certain is it, that pleaſure and happineſs, generally ſpeaking, are not peculiar to any ſtation, that they are to be found in all orders

and

and claſſes of mankind, and that in this reſpect alſo their equality is far greater, than is commonly imagined.

This being the true ſtate of the caſe, my pious hearers, let us conſtantly think and act conſiſtently with it. Underſtand and experience then your worth and dignity, ye poor and lowly among the people. I ſay not, be proud, that ſhould no creature be, and leaſt of all ſhould frail and ſinful man; but know your own worth, be ſenſible to your dignity as rational beings formed for a bleſſed immortality. Know, that ye are and are deſigned to become even that which the rich and powerful of the earth are and hereafter will be, that their preſent ſuperiority conſiſts chiefly in adventitious and tranſitory, not eſſential and permanent diſtinctions; diſtinctions which in the ſight of God and at the bar of ſound reaſon are of no intrinſic value, and which beyond the grave are abſolutely of no more avail. Humble yourſelves therefore before thoſe who by ſituation are your ſuperiors, no more than the rules of ſociety or order and propriety require. Beware of conſidering them in a manner as beings of a different and higher order than yourſelves. Honour their ſtation, their office, their authority, and ſtill more their merits, if any they have; pay them the obedience and reſpect which is their due; petition them for that relief and aſſiſtance, which you are in need of from them. But never accoſt them with the timidity of a ſlave; never cringingly implore their

protection; never purchaſe their favour by baſe fawning and flattery; be never the blind worſhippers and implicit copiers of their opinions, their principles, their praiſes or their cenſures. Ye would degrade yourſelves by ſuch a conduct, renounce your natural equality with them, and render yourſelves unworthy of the rank you occupy among the creatures of God.

And ye, who are rich and great and mighty, be not proud of your diſtinctions. They have more ſhow than reality. They are not eſſential to you. Ye will not and cannot retain them in perpetuity. Perhaps ye may loſe them even prior to your deceaſe. Into the grave you certainly cannot take them along with you; but ſhame and remorſe and reproach will follow you thither, will purſue you even in eternity, if ye have abuſed them to the purpoſes of pride and vanity, if ye have employed them to the detriment and injury of your brethren. Learn at leaſt to diſtinguiſh the ſubſtantial from the adventitious, the everlaſting from that which is but of momentary duration. Learn to value yourſelves ſimply as men and not as rich, as great, as privileged perſons, no, ſimply as men. Learn to diſtinguiſh yourſelf from the outward objects that ſurround you, and yet form no part of yourſelf, and to ſeek your worth, your perfection, your happineſs not without, but within you. Strive after thoſe diſtinctions of mind and heart, which ye may for ever retain, which will exhilarate you in eternity.

And

And all of ye, my pious hearers, of whatever ſtation, of whatever claſs, reſpect one another, reſpect the man, not the name that he bears, not the rank in which he ſtands, not the wealth that he poſſeſſes, not the cloaths that he wears, no, reverence his rational, immortal nature. Honour intelligence and wiſdom and virtue, whereſoever ye find them, and in whatever form, in whatever garb, under whatever names they may appear. To conclude, with one conſent, unite in proſtrating yourſelves in adoration before your common creator and father, in humbly acknowledging his grandeur and your nullity, his ſupremacy and your dependence on him, in thanking him for his benefits, rejoicing in your future high deſtination and thus rendering yourſelves progreſſively more meet for it by mutual affection and ſupport. Yes, my friends, the oftener we meditate on God, our univerſal father in heaven, on his parental affection and providential care for us all; the more perfectly we regard our preſent life as what it really is, and the oftener we carry our thoughts into the future world: the more ſhall we learn to conſider and love one another as members of one family, as brothers and ſiſters of one lineage; the more agreeable and pleaſant ſhall we render to one another our ſhort ſojourn on earth, the more ſure and rapid will be our approaches towards the prize of perfection to which we are called.

CHAP. XXXI.

The Diverſity of Station and outward Proſperity among Mankind.

GOD, creator and ruler of the world, all that we know of thy works is replete with beauty and magnificence, all bears witneſs to the infinite wiſdom and benignity of its author, all is regulated on the plan of conſummate order and conſiſtency, and adapted to promote the nobleſt purpoſes. The greateſt diverſity and the completeſt harmony reign throughout the whole of thy immenſe domain, and loudly proclaim thy infinite majeſty. Perfection and happineſs are the ultimate end of thy adminiſtration, and thou art gradually bringing every creature, from the animated particle of duſt to the moſt exalted ſpirit, ever nearer to that grand object. To us men thou haſt alſo aſſigned that ſtation on the ſcale of being, which is beſt ſuited to our nature, and on which we may, by following thy gracious and holy will, render ourſelves fit for a ſuperior ſtation. Thou haſt diſtributed talents and endow-

endowments among us in various meaſures, and haſt thus connected us together as the members of one body, that we might continually exerciſe ourſelves in all the ſocial virtues. Thou haſt placed us in a ſtate of mutual dependence, that we might have more opportunities and motives, to become as wiſe and as good as it is poſſible for us here to be. Lord, we revere thy ordinances with humility and gratitude. We are aſhamed of all the diſcontented and peeviſh thoughts, that have ever defiled our ſouls. Heartily would we ſubmit to be guided and governed by thee, who alone art wiſe and ſupremely kind. Withdraw not thy light and thy favour from us. Let us always keep in view the important ends we are here on earth deſigned to reach, and grant that we may with all poſſible fidelity and fortitude continually labour at the more complete attainment of them. Bleſs in this view the meditations on which we are about to enter, and hearken to our prayer, for the ſake of thy ſon, our mediator and redeemer, in whoſe name we thus farther invoke thee: Our father, &c.

PROV. xxii. 2.

The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.

IT is no honour either to the underſtanding or the heart of man, that the teacher of religion is ſo frequently under the neceſſity of juſtifying the methods

thods of divine providence. Ought we to doubt for a moment, that, whatever God does is right and fit? Have we not before us evidence ſufficient to prove, that he poſſeſſes infinite intelligence, infallible wiſdom, conſummate goodneſs? And though we ſhould perceive things in the world, which ſeem to contradict this ſovereign wiſdom and benignity, ought not that proof to have ſo much weight with us as to lead us to look for this ſeeming contradiction, not in the matter itſelf, but in the incompetency of our knowledge and our ſagacity? Should we judge the dealings of mankind with more candour than the diſpenſations of heaven! If we are acquainted with a perſon whom we know from evident proofs to be fraught with juſt and generous ſentiments, to adhere ſteadily to the dictates of juſtice and equity, to be of a beneficent diſpoſition, if we ſee ſuch a perſon do ſomething that ſeems at variance with thoſe habitual ſentiments, with thoſe dictates, with that character, do we immediately condemn him? Do we not rather ſay to ourſelves: There muſt be ſome particular reaſons unknown to us, that have moved him to act in this or that manner, ſince it is impoſſible that he ſhould wittingly and willingly do any thing that is not right? And ſhall we not much rather judge in this manner of the deity, of God, whoſe intelligence infinitely ſurpaſſes ours, whoſe ſway is ſo extenſive, whoſe domain is immenſe, whoſe unerring view comprehends the paſt, the preſent and the future? And is it not very frequently to be imputed

imputed ſolely to our want of reflection, that we fail of perceiving the wiſdom and benignity of this or that regulation that God has eſtabliſhed in the world? Have we not often already been obliged with ſhame to retract our fooliſh and froward judgments concerning his dealings, after having calmly and diſpaſſionately reviſed our opinions? To ſuch rational reconſiderations it is my wiſh this day to give you ſome direction. It relates to the diverſity of ſtations and the unequal diſtribution of the goods of fortune, that ſubſiſt among mankind. We are taught both by reaſon and the ſacred writings, that this conſtitution is eſtabliſhed by God himſelf in our preſent ſtate, and that he had wiſe and gracious deſigns in ſo doing. The rich and poor, it is ſaid in our text, meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all. At the ſame time it is not to be denied that the difference of ſtation and outward proſperity is mixed with various troubles and inconveniences, partly ariſing from that conſtitution itſelf, partly however and principally from the abuſe of it. If the man who preſumes to contend with his maker, fixes his attention ſolely on theſe hardſhips and inconveniences, he may very eaſily be miſled to accuſe the divine providence of injuſtice or a want of wiſdom and goodneſs. I purpoſe now, my pious hearers, to caution you againſt this erroneous and criminal conduct, and to give you ſuch ideas of the ſubject as may induce you humbly to revere the divine providence, to be ſatisfied with the ways of heaven, and

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to make the beſt uſe of its arrangements. To this end I ſhall attempt firſt to ſhew you, that the diverſity of ſtation and of outward fortune is not only inherent in our nature, but is even an inſtitution of divine wiſdom and goodneſs extremely beneficial to us. This done, I ſhall lay before you the moral obligations that reſult from this doctrine.

I ſay therefore firſt: The diverſity of ſtation, of power, of authority, of wealth and the like, is inherent in the nature of man. And in fact, my friends, a complete independence, a perfect equality of ſtation and outward fortune is abſolutely impoſſible, as long as men are what they are, as long as there ſubſiſts a manifold diverſity in their natural capacities, abilities and inclinations. But this diverſity in their natural capacities, abilities and inclinations does actually ſubſiſt, and it reſts not altogether on chance or on the injuſtice of mankind, ſince it originates, if not in the very nature of the ſoul, yet ſurely in the conſtitution of the body which it inhabits, the external objects by which man is environed, the early education that he receives and the climate allotted him for his abode, and which cannot poſſibly be everywhere the ſame. Suppoſe now, that all at once by ſome miracle of providence the difference of ſtation were aboliſhed, that all the goods of fortune, the whole maſs of property, were divided in equal portions among mankind, how long would, how long could this equality ſubſiſt? One perſon will diligently cultivate his own allotment of land,

land, he will by his prudence and induſtry obtain as rich a produce from the earth as it is able to yield, he will therefore in a few years double his income, and acquire a ſuperfluity. Another on the contrary will be prevented by his indolence, from properly exerting his underſtanding and his abilities, he will either not obſerve, or not employ the favourable circumſtances that offer for increaſing his fortune, he will commit ſignal miſtakes in the application and management of his property, and in a ſhort time will be in want even of neceſſaries. The former has therefore the advantage of the latter. This man muſt apply to the other for relief and aſſiſtance. He is therefore already again in a certain ſtate of dependence upon him, and if both continue their ſeveral conduct for any length of time, if many act thus likewiſe, the equipoiſe on the whole muſt gradually be loſt, and a diſtinction between rich and poor, great and ſmall, wiſe men and fools, ſuperiors and inferiors muſt naturally enſue. Is it not hence apparent, that a perfect equality of ſtation and external proſperity is irreconcileable with the nature of man and with the ſeveral regulations which God has eſtabliſhed on the earth, and that to be angry on this account is in fact nothing elſe than to be angry, that God among the innumerable ſwarms of creatures whom his goodneſs has called into being, ſhould alſo have produced the human race, and aſſigned them this globe for their habitation? The proof however that the difference of ſtation is neceſ-

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ſarily inherent in our nature, will not pacify the diſcontented man. He will probably lament and complain of this neceſſity, that he is ſubjected to it againſt his will. But will he juſtly do ſo if we prove to him, that God in this inſtitution had the wiſeſt and kindeſt deſigns in view, and that it is in reality calculated to procure to every one in particular and to all in general manifold and important benefits?

Certain it is in the firſt place, that without the diverſity of eſtates and conditions of life, we ſhould be abſolutely obliged to forego very many of the conveniences which we now enjoy. We ſhould be more independent, but we ſhould alſo have leſs ſupport in weakneſs, leſs protection in dangers, leſs help in miſery, leſs relief in diſtreſs. And how burdenſome would life become if every one were obliged to provide himſelf neceſſaries alone, every one to procure and prepare for himſelf whatever he wanted for his maintenance, for his food and cloathing, for his recreation and amuſement? Would not the irrational animals in this reſpect be far happier than we, as they receive their cloathing and their weapons from nature, and are led by unerring inſtinct in the choice of what may be uſeful or pernicious to them? It is true, our wants would be the leſs numerous, but they would ſtill be numerous enough to expoſe us to the greateſt inconveniences and dangers, and to incapacitate us for the liberal kinds of buſineſs and pleaſure. Now, that there is ſuch a great diverſity of ſtates and conditions of life, each

each alleviates the trouble of the other. Now one provides for this, the other for a different want or gratification, and as he may confine his attention and induſtry to a ſmall number of matters, he ſoon attains to ſuch dexterity in them, as rarely allows him to experience any great trouble or inconvenience in what he has to do. Now thouſands of hands are employed for the accommodation of every individual member of ſociety, and each individual member of ſociety in return contributes on his part to the eaſe and convenience of a thouſand others. Now all is connected together in the moſt diverſified manner, and the general wants and profits of ſociety are ſo implicated in one another, that each is obliged to care for all, and all for each. As the poor cannot do without the rich nor the weak without the powerful, ſo neither can the rich do without the poor, nor the great without the ſmall, and if the relative ſituations in which they are placed are not always attended with an amicable commutation of ſervices and civilities, it is not the diverſity of ſtation but the abuſe of it that is in fault. What a delightful aſpect does ſocial life aſſume, when contemplated in this point of view! What a charming proſpect does it preſent to the commoner as well as to the peer, as he revolves in thought the various claſſes of mankind, and obſerves his connection with them! Thoſe, may he ſay to himſelf, are watching for my ſafety and repoſe. Theſe are meditating how they ſhall advertiſe me of my moſt ſerious concerns and give me

comfort in affliction and hope in death. Others again are ſearching after the ſafeſt medicines, whereby they may aſſuage my pains and heal my ſickneſſes. Some are gathering in the fruits of the field in remote or circumjacent diſtricts for me; others are preparing them in various methods for my uſe; others are employed in defending me againſt the inclemencies of the weather, the noxious influences of heat and cold, others again are occupied in procuring me various kinds of entertainment and recreation. Which of us, my friends, would barter theſe advantages, which originate from the diverſity of ſtation, for the melancholy happineſs of a perfectly independent man, abandoned to himſelf, and who, if nobody can oppreſs him, neither has any one that could protect him, aſſiſt him and cheer him?

Add to this ſecondly, that by this regulation eſtabliſhed by the deity mankind have the beſt opportunity for employing their ſeveral capacities, faculties and endowments, and of carrying them to the higheſt degree of perfection which they can here attain. The difference of ſtates and conditions of life introduces a great variety of projects and deſigns, of occupations, exertions, labours and amuſements. Is it expedient that theſe plans ſhould be executed, theſe objects attained, theſe exertions undertaken and finiſhed, theſe buſineſſes minded, theſe labours performed, theſe amuſements invented and enjoyed, it can no otherwiſe be effected than

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by the application of the equally different and multifarious capacities, faculties and endowments. Here are wanted reflection and judgment, there reſolution and courage; here acuteneſs and ingenuity, there continued, toilſome application; here intelligence and reaſon, there ſprightlineſs and wit; here ſtrict accuracy and exactitude, there graceful eaſe and quickneſs of parts; here an aptitude to ſee a number of objects and connect them together, there an expertneſs in conſidering and manufacturing ſmall detached parts of this whole; here ſtrength and vivacity of mind, there ſtrength and agility of body are required. Diverſe therefore as the capacities and powers of mankind are, they may nevertheleſs in the preſent conſtitution of things all be produced and exerted; they are all ſet in motion either by the neceſſity or by the ſatisfaction that is combined with the application of them, either by the hope of the profit and honour that we expect from them, or by other extrinſic circumſtances; they are all actually employed, and taken in general, to the common welfare of ſociety. How many capacities, how many talents and energies would on the contrary remain either wholly unemployed, or be but rarely tried in a very drowzy and negligent manner, if a perfect equality of ſtation and property, a complete independency ſubſiſted among mankind! How could the capacities, the moſt refined energies of genius, be diſplayed in all their magnitude, if entirely abſorbed in providing for animal ſuſtenance,

and the celeſtial fire that glows within were extinguiſhed by worldly cares? Would not in that caſe the moſt inquiſitive minds be wanting in leiſure as well as in motive to ſearch after truth and to labour at elucidating thoſe matters in which mankind are moſt concerned, I mean religion and morality? Would not ignorance, rudeneſs and barbarity be a neceſſary conſequence of that equality? Social life, the connections in which we are placed with others, the intercourſe that we have with them, and the advantages we expect to derive from them, are the primary inducements to communicate our conceptions and knowledge and as it were to lend our abilities one to the other; by complaiſance and agreeable manners to gain the goodwill of our fellow-creatures, and to acquire their eſteem by conſpicuous attainments and merits. Would this however be compaſſed, if no one were dependent on another, if no one had either profit or detriment, either honour or diſgrace, either puniſhment or reward to expect from others? Would not every one content himſelf with the ſmall ſtock of knowledge indiſpenſably neceſſary to his ſupport and to the gratification of his animal cravings? Is not this very expanſion of the human capacities the principle on which the divine providence keeps children ſo long in a ſtate of imbecility and dependance, whereas the brutes are almoſt immediately ſufficient to themſelves without the aid of their parents, and quite independent? The former are to become rational.

This can only be brought about by means of tuition, and this tuition could not be effected, if children were not obliged to remain with their parents, in perfect ſubmiſſion for ſeveral years to their government and direction. As it is with children in this reſpect, ſo is it likewiſe with mankind in general; were it not for their mutual dependance, and the diverſity of ſtates and conditions of life they would not far ſurpaſs the beaſts of the field, and reaſon, that grand prerogative of their nature would lie in them almoſt entirely dormant and inert.

This is not all, my pious hearers. We may ſtill conſider the difference of ſtation appointed by God in ſeveral other points of view. We may ſtill obſerve in it other evidences of his wiſdom and goodneſs. By means of this divine œconomy every ſpecies of ſatisfaction and pleaſure is enjoyed whereof mankind are capable, and theſe ſatisfactions and pleaſures taken together, conſtitute unqueſtionably the greateſt poſſible ſum of happineſs or of agreeable ſenſations, that could have place in the preſent ſtate of man. How few the ſpecies of pleaſure to which mankind would be reſtricted, if they were in all reſpects equal! How greatly would the vivacity of their pleaſure be diminiſhed by its uniformity! To ſupply with more or leſs trouble a few daily recurring wants, and to paſs the remainder of their time and their abilities, either in indolent repoſe, in a ſort of ſtupefaction, in a dull and obſcure though not diſagreeable ſentiment of their exiſtence,

iſtence, or in aimleſs and idle ſpeculations, is what would probably compoſe the narrow circle of their occupations and pleaſures. How much more diverſified and intereſting do they become, on figuring to ourſelves a ſociety and in it the diverſity of condition? What ſpecies of agreeable ſenſations, what ſpecies of ſatisfaction can well be imagined that would not naturally grow out of it? Where ſo great a variety of aims, connections, occupations and conditions of life are found, where all the capacities of the human ſoul are drawn forth and all its energies exerted, how greatly muſt the pleaſures of ſenſe as well as the pleaſure of the mind and heart be multiplied! And how exceſſively ſhould we be miſtaken, were we to ſuppoſe that the difference of ſtation produced theſe advantages only to the higher and not to the lower claſſes of mankind! No, if it be agreeable to the great and powerful, to ſee themſelves environed by a multitude of friends or flatterers, and to be known, reſpected, honoured by all men, it is alſo to the man of low eſtate perhaps ſtill more agreeable, to live in a happy obſcurity and to have only a few faithful friends about him, who attract as little notice as himſelf. If it be a tranſporting ſatisfaction to the prince to labour at the proſperity of whole nations and countries, and to be bleſſed by thouſands for his beneficent endeavours, his ſubjects muſt feel no leſs ſenſible delight, when they indulge themſelves in reflecting, that they have a father in their prince, under whoſe protection the honeſt man

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may be ſafe and enjoy the fruit of his labour in undiſturbed repoſe. If the teacher of religion or the ſciences is moſt agreeably compenſated for his pains by the attention of his audience and by the utility or the comfort they derive from his lectures, he opens at the ſame time to thoſe who thus reward him, exuberant ſources of refined and exalted pleaſure, as he diffuſes around them a reſplendent light, enriches their minds with new attainments in knowledge, and warms their heart with the ſentiment of the true, the beautiful and good. If the rich man gratifies his taſte by the variety and choice of his diſhes and his liquors, and rejoices in his abundance, the day-labourer has his bread and his water rendered ſavoury to him by toil and hunger, and if the former ſlumbers on a downy pillow, the latter has his full equivalent in florid health, and the taſk of the day not finiſhed without fatigue ſecures to him the enjoyment of balmy repoſe. This hearty appetite for his homely fare and the wearineſs that inſenſibly ſinks him in the arms of ſleep amply repay him for the privation of ſuch accommodations and elegancies as luxury can ſupply. If the former, the child of proſperity, procures to himſelf tranſports extatic, celeſtial, divine, by ſuccouring the diſtreſſed and relieving the poor, the latter alſo enjoys a ſatisfaction that ſeems to tranſcend the capacity of his ſoul, a truly ineffable delight, when he perceives in his generous benefactor as it were an angel of God, commiſſioned to him by providence, for ſnatching him

from ruin and turning his lamentations into hymns of praiſe. So many pleaſures, my friends, which together with many others could either not at all, or at leaſt not in ſuch various degrees and with ſuch lively emotion be enjoyed by mankind, if no inequality of ſtation and outward proſperity ſubſiſted among them.

To conclude, this diverſity of ſtation and outward proſperity are excellent means of exerciſing us in virtue, and ſo of rendering us capable of the perfection and happineſs of another life. All things tell us, my friends, that to us the preſent œconomy is a ſtate of education, of diſcipline and practice. Here it is our buſineſs to learn the real value of objects, and to diſtinguiſh what is truly beautiful and good, from what has only the appearance of the beautiful and good. Our affections are to be directed to worthy objects, and by the difficulties we have to conquer in the achievement, to be fixed in that direction. We muſt therefore have opportunity for learning to know ourſelves, our ſtrength or weakneſs. We muſt meet with obſtructions on the road to perfection, which require us to exert our powers, and teach us to employ them in the beſt and nobleſt manner. We muſt have occaſions for practiſing that virtue whereof we are capable, and for giving various proofs of rectitude and fidelity. But what is better calculated to promote theſe deſigns, than the diverſity of ſtates and conditions among mankind? How many virtues would without

out it be either not at all, or far ſeldomer and more imperfectly practiſed! Do not moderation, humility, patience, reſignation, contentment, fortitude in dangers and temptations moſtly depend on the unequal diſtribution of the goods of fortune and the diverſity of ſituations in ſociety? Do not mercy and beneficence, generoſity and condeſcenſion on the one ſide preſuppoſe on the other ſide dependance; do not weakneſs and miſery, on the other ſide, imply riches authority and power; and could theſe divine propenſions be tried and exerciſed if no diverſity of ſtation ſubſiſted? What an excellent ſpectacle of moral beauty and perfection would on the other hand be produced if every one practiſed the virtues for which his ſtation ſupplied him with opportunity, and remained ſtedfaſt under the ſeveral trials to which it expoſed him? Yes, how many truly great and noble ſentiments and actions are actually produced by it among mankind! How greatly is the ſum of moral good that is among them increaſed by it! Here I behold power and authority in the hands of one, who, deaf to the bewitching voice of the ſycophant, is ever ſenſible of his natural frailty and dependance on the ſupreme being, bears always in mind, that all mankind are his brethren, and conſiders his conſequence as of real value only in proportion to the greater good he can effectuate thereby. There I ſee another tempted by the countleſs lures of eaſe and plenty to arrogance, to vanity, to luxury, to riot and intemperance, yet keeping within

in the bounds of moderation, and ſubmitting to be governed by an humble and heavenly ſpirit! Here I perceive a man, who in the loweſt ſtation maintains the dignity of his nature and the nobleneſs of his mind, ſcorning all meanneſs, and rejecting with diſdain the eaſy methods that are pointed out to him of raiſing himſelf from the duſt, becauſe they are irreconcilable with truth and rectitude. There I am ſtruck with the ſight of a poor, diſtreſſed object, forced to groan beneath the yoke of injuſtice and oppreſſion, yet retaining his courage and confidence, becauſe he puts his truſt in God and expects of him a full indemnification in a better world for the wrongs he has ſuffered here. What reſplendent virtues, my friends! And what diſtinctions may they not promiſe themſelves in a ſuperior ſtate who in the preſent are exerciſed in them? What will not God hereafter entruſt to them, ſince they now in the moſt adverſe circumſtances give proofs of ſuch fidelity? Should we however have ſo many and ſuch extraordinary opportunities, ſuch ſtrong incitements, to exerciſe ourſelves in theſe and other virtues, were there not a manifold diverſity of ſtations among mankind?

Combine this conſideration with the foregoing, my pious hearers, and you will be forced to confeſs that we have no reaſon to complain of this regulation in our preſent ſtate, inaſmuch as it is appointed by God. No, we have rather the ſtrongeſt arguments for admiring and adoring in this inſtance likewiſe his

his wiſdom and goodneſs, and for adopting a conduct agreeable to his deſigns.

Let therefore every one of us be contented with his ſituation. This is the firſt duty incumbent on us from the principles now laid down. It is not blind chance, not the injuſtice of mankind, it is God, the wiſe and tender parent of the human race, that has placed us in it. Nothing was due to us from him. The ſmalleſt boon that he concedes to us is more than we have any right to demand. He loves us all, he cares for us all, he is the father of us all, and the ſeveral relations and connections in which he has placed his children, are doubtleſs, this we may ſafely rely on, are doubtleſs the fitteſt means, for rendering his whole family as perfect and happy, as they can here become. But the plan on which he proceeds, is too large and extenſive for us, we ſhall not be able to comprehend it in its full perfection, till it is executed, till we perceive the preſent in its combination with the future. In the mean time every ſtate has its advantages and comforts as well as its troubles and vexations. Diſcontent alone can deprive us of thoſe advantages and comforts, and ſwell thoſe troubles and vexations into a burden too heavy for us to bear. Would ye be wiſe, would ye be happy, my friends, look not with envious eyes on thoſe who fill the higher ſtations in ſociety. Let not the deceitful glare of majeſty, of power, of authority, of opulence that ſurrounds them impoſe upon your judgment. Always

ways bear in mind what a price they pay for theſe diſtinctions and how little ſolid happineſs is connected with them. Learn on the other hand rightly to underſtand and to uſe the advantages of your own ſituation. Acquire the habit of viewing it on its moſt agreeable ſide, and let this truth, that God knows us far better than we know ourſelves, and that he is uniformly conſulting our welfare, let this truth ſoothe and refreſh you particularly at ſuch times as you moſt ſenſibly feel the troubles and inconveniences of your condition.

Let each of us only, and this is the ſecond duty which is obligatory upon us from the foregoing conſiderations, let each of us only act up to his ſtation, with all poſſible fidelity in every particular. This is all that God requires of us, and at the ſame time all that can give us any real worth, that can render us uſeful and deſerving members of ſociety, and procure us the complacency of our univerſal father in heaven. How ſlender ſoever the abilities that are lent us, how inconſiderable ſoever the affairs that are aſſigned us, yet we may and ought in ſome reſpects to deem ourſelves as neceſſary and important parts of the great whole, and as confidently rely upon the approbation of the Almighty, as thoſe who occupy the chief poſts among their brethren, if we do but employ our faculties in the beſt manner we are able, and tranſact our affairs with faithfulneſs and induſtry. Yes, my friends, he who in his ſtation and calling, whether it be low or high, looks

looks ſteadily to God and ſtrives to pleaſe him; he who willingly and in pure intentions does that which he ought and is able to do; he who holds his duty inviolate and is prompt in fulfilling it, becauſe he knows it to be impoſed on him by God; he who in his ſtraightened circumſtances eagerly ſeizes all opportunities of being uſeful to others, and even under the ingratitude and ſcorn of the world never alters his purpoſe, conſoling himſelf with the hope of a better life: that man worthily maintains his poſt, he adds a luſtre to it by his conduct, he alone merits the eſteem of the good, he renders himſelf capable and worthy of being hereafter exalted, and his reward will aſſuredly be great in the world to come.

Let us therefore, my friends, and this is the third and laſt duty that ariſes from our foregoing conſiderations, let us with extraordinary diligence ſtrive after a ſuperior ſtation in a future world. Even in that world we ſhall unqueſtionably find a great diverſity of dignities, of honours, of power, of felicity. But this diverſity will be regulated on quite other principles, than ſuch as are current on earth. Here our ſtation very often depends on our birth and on the connection wherein without our concurrence, nay not unfrequently without our conſent divine providence has placed us. Here elevation and meanneſs, riches and poverty are never ſure proofs of the good or bad properties, the greater or leſs value of the perſon. Here the wiſe man is ſometimes

times obliged to ſerve the fool, and the juſt man to augment the treaſures of the unjuſt, as is meet for the ſtate of diſcipline and exerciſe in which we live. But there, my friends, there birth, relationſhip, riches, chance and fortune can give us no precedence. There only perſonal merit, only virtue and probity will be honoured and rewarded. There all depends on the fidelity with which we have here maintained our poſt and fulfilled our duty. There I behold the ſlave who toiled through his days under the laſh of an oppreſſor, yet acted honeſtly and thought nobly, far exalted above his barbarous maſter; there I behold the illiterate clown, who faithfully followed his glimmering light, filling a far more honourable ſituation than his teacher, who with his juſter and more extenſive perceptions was leſs hoſpitable and kind. The prince himſelf muſt there yield precedence to the moſt deſpiſed of his late ſubjects, if the latter as a ſubject, has given more and ſtronger proofs of godlineſs and virtue than the former as a prince might and ought to have done. Theſe, and theſe alone are diſtinctions that merit our utmoſt ambition, for they are real and eternal. After theſe diſtinctions let us ſtrive, my dearly beloved. To become progreſſively wiſer, more virtuous, more pleaſing to God, be that the prize for which we contend in the race we are running. We may attain it in every ſtation, in every condition of life, and if we attain it, if we are daily approaching nearer to it, it may ſurely be

a matter

a matter of very little conſequence to us, whether at preſent for ſome few fleeting years we be high or low, rich or poor, famous or unknown. Time is gliding by, eternity is coming on with rapid pace. Well, everlaſtingly well for him, who ſhall then be found faithful, and in reward of his fidelity be promoted over many others!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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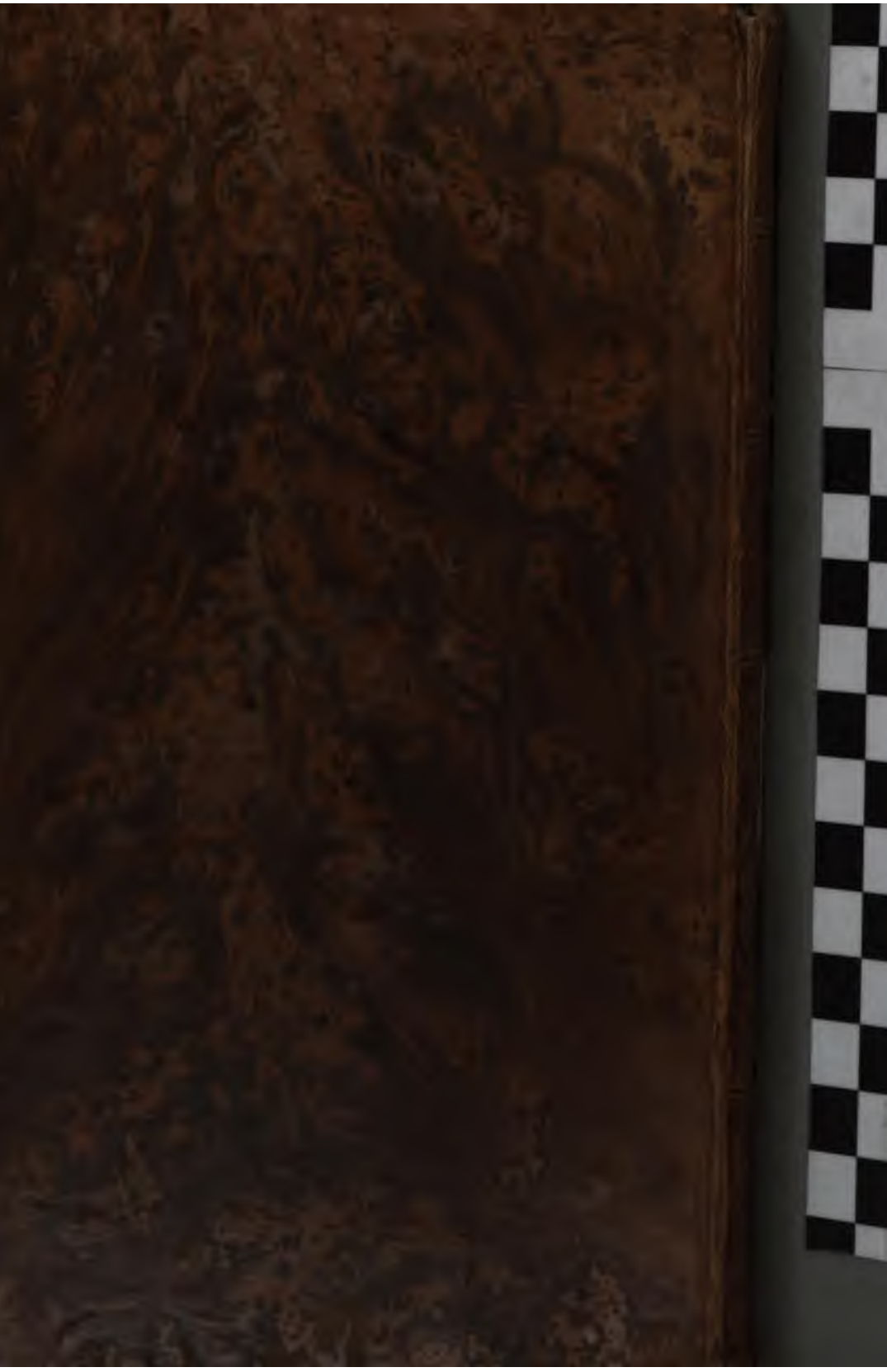
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